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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE EXILE ARCHETYPE IN NELLY SACHS' POETRY

BY

BERNADETTE M. G. MACISAAC

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND

RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN

GERMANIC LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 1990

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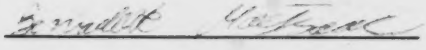

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Holger Pausch
.....

Supervisor

.....

.....

Date March 26, '90

To Dan, Beni, Maria and Karl

Abstract

The Jewish people were exposed throughout much of their history to repeated exile and persecution. The critic Bettina Knapp suggested that these experiences created an exile archetype, a special psychological condition. This archetype has two movements: "being in exile," which includes severance from personal roots or a unified source, and "return from exile," which is a possible transformation or transcendence of the separated state.

The application of Knapp's theory, which is based on Jungian archetypal theory, to Nelly Sachs' work indicates that Sachs, a Jewish writer, had a predisposition to creating a myth from her experience of exile. Thus, Sachs expressed the exile archetype in her poetry.

After the problem development in Chapter I, Chapter II discusses the "in exile" movement in Nelly Sachs' early poetry. The poet portrays the Jews as Holocaust victims who live as exiles within Germany.

Chapter III outlines Kabbalistic and Chassidic myths of exile and describes their influence on Sachs' work. Using visionary imagery from these Jewish mystical texts, her poetry connotes the notion that the visible universe is exiled from the primal divine order. Consequently, all of creation is exposed to suffering and alienation in a dark and hardened world.

Chapter IV analyzes the positive aspect of the exile archetype -- the return from exile. Adapting exile imagery from the Kabbalah and Chassidic writings, Nelly Sachs communicates her vision of a

transformation of the banished universe into a blossoming sphere of music and light.

By fusing adaptations of the traditional exile symbolism with her own imagery, Sachs presents a unique archetype in her poetry.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Dr. Pausch, my supervisor, for his guidance and advice. Also, I am very grateful to family and friends for their support, and especially to my husband Dan for his continuous encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

"Exile . . . is an endless paradox:
looking forward by always looking back."
— Salman Rushdie

Nelly Sachs (1891-1970) lived in Berlin, Germany, until 1940 when she fled to Sweden to avoid transport to the "ingeniously conceived homes of death," "den sinnreich erdachten Wohnungen des Todes."[1] There she stayed in exile for the rest of her life, apart from a few visits to other European countries. And it is in exile that she started to write her known poetry. The critic Bahr suggests that these years of emigration and exile, which for Sachs were accompanied by poverty, homelessness and constant fear of the Holocaust, actually reflect the fate of many of her generation of German Jews (Bahr 29). This exile experience remained central to her life and work.

Exile experiences are not idiosyncratic. They often emerge from historical circumstances. Notably, the Jews — as well as many other peoples such as the Huguenots, Puritans and Armenians — were exposed throughout much of their history to repeated exile and persecution. In her book, Jungian Analysis of Literature, Bettina Knapp suggested that these harrowing experiences created a special condition in such peoples: the exile archetype. Basically, an archetype, as understood by Jung, is the psychic remnant of myriad, highly similar experiences which happened to the ancestors of an

individual but are inherited by the individual and "stored" within his unconscious mind (Bodkin 1). Moreover, the exile archetype has two aspects, a positive one and a negative one (Knapp 189). The negative aspect is the separation from personal roots, which may result in suffering and alienation. The positive aspect is the possible transformation of the separation experience. Knapp calls this potential change a "rite de passage" or a return to a transformed state (189). Transformation involves the spiritual or psychological growth which is attained when one recognizes the pain of an event. But the pain is not overpowering. Transformation goes beyond mere realization to a transcendence of suffering.

Through analysis of Nelly Sachs' poetry, this thesis will show the existence of an exile archetype in her work; and in this context it will be necessary to look into her sources — the Bible and Jewish mystical writings. The exile archetype is evident in Jewish cultural history, which is represented and reflected by the Bible and Jewish oracular works such as the Kabbalah and Chassidic tales. In these writings, Sachs found a symbolic expression of her experience of exile. Through the mythological presentation of the exile archetype in the Bible and Jewish visionary texts, she discovered a typology for herself and for all humanity. The poet used ideas, symbols, images and concepts from these writings but never adopted one system. Rather, Nelly Sachs merged symbols from these sources with her own imagery to create a unique and distinct exile archetype. However, her own experience remained primary. In the mystical texts, Sachs discovered only what she already knew intuitively. Those writings reaffirmed and

validated the insights of her own mind.

Nelly Sachs' unique expression of the exile experience is reflected in her works. Bahr suggests that, unlike contemporaries such as Bertolt Brecht, Karl Wolfskehl and Lion Feuchtwanger, Nelly Sachs never wrote about her personal life in a land of exile (97). Yet exile is one of the central themes in her poetry. Bahr points out that, although Sachs never uses the term "Exil" or "Verbannung," exile as a theme is strongly present in her work through association and key words such as "Abschied," "Asyl," "Flucht," and "Wanderung" (97).

In spite of the fact that the exile theme is central, detailed studies and analysis of this aspect of Sachs' work have not yet been published. Thus far, secondary literature merely comments occasionally about an exile theme in Nelly Sachs' writing. Through detailed analysis, this thesis will reveal the exile archetype in Sachs' poetry, applying Jungian archetypal theory and developing Bettina Knapp's suggestion that Sachs had a predisposition to create her own unique archetype from her experience of exile. The purpose of such an analysis is threefold. First, focusing on a particular central element in Nelly Sachs' poetry allows detailed analysis of her work. Second, the Jungian perspective introduces universality to a very specific topic. Through archetypal analysis of Sachs' work and her sources, the aspects of universal meaning and historical relevance of her work are revealed. Third, a detailed source study of specific symbols, images and ideas will make her work easier to understand and more accessible to readers. Before the poetry can be analyzed, however, it is necessary to give an overview of Sachs' literary development, the

literary context of her work, and the relationship between literature and psychology. To clarify this interdisciplinary relationship, the methodology and terminology of this thesis must also be identified.

Chapter I

PROBLEM DEVELOPMENT

Nelly Sachs, the only daughter of well-to-do Jewish parents, was born and raised in Berlin where she remained until forced to leave in 1940. Her father, a gifted amateur musician, was an artistic influence on her; music later became an important motif in her poetry.

Various other influences developed as Nelly Sachs matured into her adolescence and youth. Major influences on the youthful writer were the nineteenth - century authors, especially Hölderlin, Gotthelf and Stifter (Falkenstein 11-12). She was particularly fascinated by the writings of Selma Lagerlöf. In this phase of her life, however, Nelly Sachs was not yet interested in Judaism. Although she received some education in the Jewish religion from a rabbi, she thought Judaism was too rational and legalistic. Instead, she studied writers of the Christian tradition, such as Francis of Assisi, Jacob Boehme and Meister Eckhart. As well, she read Classical writers and literature from the Far East (Falkenstein 11). Her favourite modern authors included Barlach, Kafka, Loerke and Döblin. However, her favourite modern authors were not significant influences; Michel points out that Nelly Sachs was not even influenced by contemporary schools of literary thought: "Nelly Sachs ist in ihrer Lyrik wenig von literarischen, vor allem kaum von zeitgenössischen Strömungen beeinflusst" (184).

A sensitivity to Romantic writers, rather than a copying of

contemporary trends, is evident in Nelly Sachs' first book of prose fiction, Legenden und Erzählungen (1921), which was written in a nineteenth-century prose style (Falkenstein 12-13). Eight years later, her first poems were published. Sachs wrote folk poetry about the countryside and her family. Also, Sachs worked on puppet plays, which were published in 1931-32. While producing traditional poems, Nelly Sachs composed experimental poetry with a tragic tone (Falkenstein 15). Unfortunately, little is known about these experimental poems because they were not accepted in literary circles or by publishing companies, and many of them were lost during the war. Later, Nelly Sachs would dissociate herself from these early compositions. Her close friend Berendsohn states that for Sachs herself the meaningful and creative work began in Sweden with the collection of poems In den Wohnungen des Todes and the play Vom Leiden Israels Eli (115).

The sheltered life which Nelly Sachs enjoyed during her early years was shattered in 1930 by the death of her father. This personal tragedy was soon compounded by the persecution of her people. Beginning in 1933, Nelly Sachs was exposed to the threats and horrors of the Third Reich. She was repeatedly questioned by the Gestapo. News about the disappearance and deaths of friends caused her to suffer greatly. In 1940, she succeeded in avoiding confinement in a concentration camp by escaping with her mother to Sweden. There, Sachs made her living by translating modern Swedish poetry into German. She did not earn enough, though, to avoid poverty. Also in Sweden she started to write her known work, which consists of

poetry and drama.[2] For her, writing became a necessity — a means of survival — because writing represented for her, as Brinker-Gabler states, "die Möglichkeit aus dem sprachlosen Entsetzen herauszufinden" (qtd. in Kersten, Nelly Sachs 258).

Bahr suggests that Nelly Sachs' writings from exile can be divided into three periods: early, middle and late works. These stages reflect three literary breakthroughs, which occurred in 1943-44, 1955 and 1961-65. They are accompanied by work periods of 1943-49, 1950-60 and 1961-70 respectively (Bahr 131). Her early work is heavily influenced by the realities of the Second World War, during which Sachs was confronted with the atrocities of war and displacement. According to Gisela Dischner, these tragic events of the Third Reich remain "konkrete Ausgangspunkte" for her poetry (Das Buch 314). Also, Thuswaldner highlights the relevancy of these experiences for Sachs' work:

> Die Erfahrung der nationalsozialistischen Zeit - der gewaltsame Tod naher Verwandter, Flucht und Vertreibung aus der Heimat - bilden Ausgangspunkt und Hintergrund für das literarische Werk der Nelly Sachs. (2)

Consequently, Nelly Sachs' first two collection of poems written in exile, In den Wohnungen des Todes (1947) and Sternverdunklung (1949), are predominated by themes of Holocaust, exile, Chassidism and Israel (Bahr 68). The world of Auschwitz is described precisely through concrete images, such as the shoes of the dead or smoke from concentration camp chimneys (I 8 and 11). Thus, the themes of death and suffering dominate many of her poems. Sachs laments the

cruel deaths in the concentration camps, the violent murders of the innocent. Meaningless suffering and horror cause these victims in her poetry to become speechless or insane. The critic Lawrence L. Lange describes a pattern of themes in Holocaust literature, a list which one can also apply to Sachs' early work:

> "Verdrängung des Lebensgefühls durch ein konstantes Todesbewusstsein, Disintegration der normalen Wirklichkeitserwartungen und Perversion der Vernunft, Sprachlosigkeit, gewaltsame Aufhebung der Kindheit und Kindermord, Bestialisierung des Menschen, Flucht in den Wahnsinn und Zerstörung des Zeitsinns." (Bahr 73)

All of these Holocaust themes are present in the early poetry of Nelly Sachs. At the same time, themes specific to the Holocaust are taken beyond their particular historical context and are related to Jewish history.

This expansion of vision is achieved by relating Jewish historical writings to her present situation. The Bible becomes a source of inspiration for her. Sachs recognizes the exile events in the Old Testament as typological of the fate of the Hebrews throughout history, specifically of her people's persecution under the Third Reich. In fusing Biblical motifs with images from her immediate world, she relates the historical persecution of the Jews to their suffering during World War Two. Also, she starts to relate the tragic events of the war to myths of Hebrew Chassidic writings. Throughout her early poetry, however, Nelly Sachs does not dwell on the description of the tragic events alone. Her poetry reflects a persistent note of hope. This is

achieved in that the negative experience of suffering is presented as a pre-condition to transformation.

The work of her middle period (1950-1960), which was marked by the influence of the Kabbalah, developed and expanded the themes mentioned above. In her poetry collections, Und niemand weiss weiter (1957), Flucht und Verwandlung (1959) and Fahrt ins Staublose (1961), a gradual shift in emphasis becomes apparent. The poet's acquaintance with Jewish mysticism led her to view the fate of the Jews as representative of all creation. Not only her people, but all of humanity is exposed to suffering, flight and exile (Hardegger 12). Furthermore, she points out that it is not only humanity but all of creation which is in a constant state of flight and flux; or in the words of Falkenstein:

> Die Flucht, das Unterwegssein des Menschen, die ewige Bewegung der Schöpfung, das nur scheinbar Tote des Sandes und des Steins, das Sterben der Insekten — alles zeigt, dass das Leben keinen Stillstand kennt, keine Heimat. (70)

This constant flight is caused by creation's exile from a state of primal harmony. Although creation is separated from God, there is always the possibility of return to God. As will be seen in chapter four, Sachs' poetry of this period describes the process of return, which occurs through transformation. "Flucht und Verwandlung" — flight and transformation — becomes her main theme. And the transformation is remarkable — from matter into spirit (Bahr 14). This metamorphosis is usually linked with suffering. The following lines

from "Uneinnehmbar" are a particularly intense treatment of this theme:

> So muss ich denn aufstehen
> und diesen Felsen durchschmerzen
> bis ich Staubgeworfene
> bräutlich Verschleierte
> den Seeleneingang fand (I 81)

In these poems, the process of transformation becomes more important than the goal of return from exile. Nelly Sachs describes transformation as a journey into a new ineffable state – a journey into dustlessness and an invisible universe. According to Michel, "ihr Blick weitete sich, öffnete sich für jenen Bereich, den Nelly Sachs das 'unsichtbare Universum' nannte" (25).

During the 1960's, Nelly Sachs became mentally ill. Suffering from a persecution complex, she had to spend some years in a clinic. There she wrote poetry during short periods of recovery (Falkenstein 75-76). This poetry is part of her late work, Noch feiert Tod das Leben (1961), Glühende Rätsel (1963-67), Die Suchende (1966) and Teile dich Nacht (1971).

In this late work, Bahr identifies a shift of vision:

> Das jüdische Volk wurde als stellvertretend für die leidende Menschheit verstanden. Nicht dieses oder jenes Land könne Heimat sein, sondern die Dichtung sei auf einen Ort bezogen, wo immer auch Menschen litten. Nach 1960 wurde dieser Ort das Krankenhaus. So ergibt sich bei der biographischen Verengung auf diesen Ort zugleich eine Erweiterung des Werkes ins Universale. (62)

Universal mysticism or "mystischer Synkretismus" (Bahr 13) is the key to her late work. Nelly Sachs seems to have discovered the "common core" of all strands of mystical thought, including German Romanticism, the teachings of Jakob Boehme, Chassidism and Kabbalism (Bahr 113-117).

To communicate this vision of a "common core", Sachs often selects images from commonplace events or insignificant objects. She chooses motifs from her immediate environment, such as the hospital or her room: "Die Irren im Korridor kreischen" (II 10), "Im Schnee die Frau geht" (II 108), "Ich wasche meine Wäsche" (II 12), and "Vor meinem Fenster/ der schilpende Vogel" (II 16). The poet relates these motifs to a larger universality through a mystical paradox, which is, for example, exhibited in the poem, "In meiner Kammer":

> In meiner Kammer
> wo mein Bett steht
> ein Tisch ein Stuhl
> der Küchenherd
> kniet das Universum wie überall
> um erlöst zu werden
> von der Unsichtbarkeit —
> Ich mache einen Strich
> schreibe das Alphabet
> male den selbstmörderischen Spruch an die Wand
> an dem die Neugeburten sofort knospen
> schon halte ich die Gestirne an der Wahrheit fest
> da beginnt die Erde zu hämmern
> die Nacht wird lose
> fällt aus
> toter Zahn vom Gebiss — (II 63)

The writer recognizes the universe in her simple surroundings — the chair, the stove and the table. Bahr reveals in this poem the

relationship between insignificant objects and the universe: "Kleinwohnung und Universum werden in einem mystischen Paradox aufeinanderbezogen" (115).

This mystical transcendence in Sachs' poetry is occurring everywhere in creation, even in the most commonplace situations and objects:

> Die private, alltägliche Sphäre wird ins Kosmische übergeführt, ihre Dichtung ist eine, "Universalisierung des Aktuellen" (Beda Allemann). (Thuswaldner 2)

Concrete objects and situations are given a cosmic quality. Bahr suggests that this cosmic transcendence reflects the "common core" of mysticism:

> Auf diese Weise wird das "Gemeingut" der Mystik zur Geltung gebracht und trägt in seiner unauffälligen, aber unleugbaren Präsenz zur Unterstützung des mystischen Anspruchs dieser Gedichte bei. (154)

He further points out that the goal of this transcendence is not the "unio mystica" with the divine, but rather mystical transformation itself:

> Die Dichterin hat sich ein individuelles Moment im Rahmen der universalen Mystik bewahrt, indem das Ziel bei ihr nicht in der "unio mystica" mit dem Göttlichen, sondern lediglich im Transzendieren in den Bereich des Jenseits besteht. (117)

Indeed, Sachs' poetic vision is intricate. And the complexity of her

work makes full comprehension of her writing difficult. Nevertheless, Nelly Sachs' work became known and appreciated in West Germany. Soon she received many honours such as the 1959 Lyrikpreis, the 1960 Dröste-Preis für Dichterinnen, the 1965 Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels and a shared Nobel Prize in Literature in 1966. Ironically, despite these honours, her work is now read only infrequently.

1
Literary Contexts

Nelly Sachs' work was unaffected by the literary developments of her contemporaries. Her poetry, marked by exalted language and lyrical intensity, can be enigmatic; it is also difficult to understand because it is neither traditional nor modern (Bahr 10). Moreover, as Nelly Sachs did not participate in the post-war literary schools of her contemporaries, her poetry is difficult to classify. However, when Bahr determines the tone of her poetry to be archaic and avant-garde, he suggests that Sachs' work could be understood as part of Expressionism in a broad sense: "Nelly Sachs schloss an Hölderlin und Novalis an und wiederholte auf einer neuen Ebene den deutschen Expressionismus, ohne ihn je gekannt zu haben" (10). Falkenstein agrees with Bahr, proposing that, according to the latest analysis of Expressionism and anticlassical literature, Sachs' work could belong "in den grossen Rahmen der manieristischen Antipoesie und den kleineren des deutschen Expressionismus" (93).

Although the poetry of Nelly Sachs is unique, there are correspondences and contrasts between her poems and those of her contemporaries. In particular, like some of her contemporaries, Nelly Sachs communicated the evils of the Nazi era; but, unlike many post-war German poets, she did not lose faith in society or language. Notably, Prawer points out that "much of the poetry written in German since 1945 might be called a poetry of distrust" (16). Among post-war German poets such as the Benn, Bachmann, Eich, Brecht, and Biermann, this distrust included a suspicion of society, history, literature, language, religion and God (16). Like her contemporaries, Sachs was all too cognizant of human corruption. She experienced the debasement of society and culture by the events of the Nazi period. As did Paul Celan (Prawer 102), she recognized the criminal acts of the death camps. While Celan wrote in "Todesfuge" of the terrible irony of Jews digging their own graves, "Wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng" (Prawer 102), Sachs exposes the "sinnreich erdachten Wohnungen des Todes" (I 8). But she placed this corruption in the broader context of man's exile from himself and God. However, despite the horrors, Sachs retained her faith. Unlike other post-war authors, she was not caught up in what Prawer calls "the crisis of confidence" (17). Writing, for her, was an act of necessity and faith — a growing faith in the return from exile. Nelly Sachs communicated this belief with particular intensity in the poem, "In der Flucht / welch grosser Empfang" (I 262). For her, the process of being "in exile", i.e. of existing in a state of homelessness and flight, already contains "the great welcome" into a new "home." Exile allows return.

Unlike Sachs, many post-war German poets suffered a loss of faith in language. Prawer identifies distrust of language itself and its ability to speak of man's deepest concerns (16). Bureaucratic and journalistic jargon of the post-war period exacerbated linguistic mistrust (19). Sachs also spurned the perverted language of the fascists, the government officials and hack writers. But she had faith in the ability of language to renew itself. Thus, Thuswaldner observes:

> Sie schreibt in einer Sprache der Menschlichkeit: Sie meidet die geschundene und vergewaltigte Sprache der nationalsozialistischen Zeit, sowie den (bürokratischen) Jargon der Gegenwart und findet einen radikal eigenen sprachlichen Duktus. Worte, die durch Missbrauch schal geworden sind, erneuert sie gleichsam in ihrer Dichtung, indem sie ihnen eine neue Präzision, sogar einen neuen Sinn vermittelt: z. B. Sehnsucht, Auferstehung, Heimat. Ihre Sprache unternimmt zudem den ständigen Versuch, Unsagbares in Worte zu fassen, daher liegt die Grenze zum Verstummen in unmittelbarer Nähe zu ihren Anstrengungen im Ausdruck. (6)

Thus, Nelly Sachs' faith in language found expression in her art — an art which often sought to convey the ineffable. Prior to analysing Sachs' artistic expression of her exile experience, however, this thesis will refer to a brief literary review, survey the relationship between psychology and literature, and explain the terminology and methodology which the thesis will use.

2
Literary Review

A survey of secondary literature on Nelly Sachs' work reveals three aspects of literary criticism which are relevant to this study: critical perspectives, methodology of literary analysis in Sachs' poetry, and the discussion of the exile theme in secondary literature. According to Kersten, who wrote in the early 1970's, two extreme positions of secondary criticiscm prevail — reserved scepticism and exaggerated praise. He states:

> Das sind nur zwei Stimmen, aber sie markieren exemplarisch zwei extreme Positionen im Verhältnis zu Person und Werk der seit 1940 im schwedischen Exil lebenden Dichterin: Zurrückhaltende Skepsis auf der einen Seite, . . . auf der anderen Seite bedingungslose Hochjubelei und sentimental-pathetische Hervorkehrung des im Werk der Dichterin Gestalt gewordenen Leids. (Kersten, Text und Kritik 42)

Kersten goes on to explain that there is an abundance of material written about Nelly Sachs. Most of this work, however, takes the form of general overviews and uncritical essays. Sound literary criticism is rare (Kersten, Text und Kritik 42). After the publication of Kersten's commentary, additional analytical texts on Nelly Sachs' works were published. However, the last two decades are still dominated by general overviews rather than detailed studies. From this period, I will now select the most significant critical books and dissertations for

analysis in order to sketch briefly the present state of research.

Michel suggests that the methodology used in secondary literature can be divided into two areas: 1) interpretation of language and poetic form (a linguistic approach); and (2) interpretation using intellectual history (the history of ideas) (1-3). Hence, one dominant approach thus far among critics is the interpretation of language and poetic form (Michel 1). Two representatives of this approach are Kersten and Vaerst. Kersten in Die Metaphorik in der Lyrik von Nelly Sachs (1970) views Sachs as a poet who primarily deals with language. Consequently, his interpretative approach focuses generally on language and particularly on metaphors. Kersten reveals his approach in the introduction of his book:

> Nelly Sachs hat als Dichterin, die es primär mit der Sprache zu tun hat, ein Anrecht darauf, dass die Texte nach ihrer poetischen Qualität befragt werden. Einen ersten Weg zur Bestimmung der poetische Beschaffenheit kann u. a. die vorurteilsfreie semantische Analyse des Wortmaterials und seiner funktionellen Verwandlung weisen. (7-8)

Specifically, this critic analyzes the poetic make-up of her work. As language and expression through words became a means of survival for Sachs, Kersten summarizes the central theme in Nelly Sachs' poetry:

> Im Wort ist für Nelly Sachs annäherungsweise das zu leisten, was als Zentralthema ihres Gesamtwerkes gelten kann: die von mystischem Todeserleben genährte Sehnsucht nach einer entmaterialisierenden Verwandlung der diesseitigen Wirklichkeit in eine Jenseitswelt der Vereinigung

> von Geburt and Tod, in ein "unsichtbares Universum." (Die Metaphorik 8)

Kersten claims to analyze Sachs' poetry objectively by looking at the "Wortfeld" (2), and he especially attacks writers, who try to interpret Nelly Sachs' work in the context of her background and her relationship to mysticism. Michel, on the other hand, interprets this viewpoint as a misunderstanding on Kersten's part. Although Kersten does not deny the importance of a source study, he neither considers the historical context of Nelly Sachs' life nor acknowledges his own literary training, which is reflected in his interpretations (Michel 4). Furthermore, Klingman has a similar criticism of Kersten's claim to objectivity. He points out that in most critical works about Sachs' poetry the analysis of poetic form cannot be separated from the analysis of its religious content (19). Klingman goes on to explain that although Kersten claims to be objective, i.e. Kersten claims to avoid any interpretation of Sachs' poetry in the context of her religious background, in effect Kersten actually relates all motifs to the religious - mystical content of Nelly Sachs' work:

> Seine [Kersten's] "vorurteilsfreie semantische Analyse des Wortmaterials" kann in bezug auf den in den Gedichten zum Ausdruck gebrachten religiös-mystischen Gehalt nicht als neutral und objektiv gelten, da sie direkt von seiner mystischen Themenbestimmung abhängig ist. (Klingman 19)

Indeed, Kersten does interpret Sachs' work in a religious-mystical context and given the limitations of its critical analysis, Kersten's book

is most valuable in the interpretation of related motifs and metaphors of the exile archetype.

Like Kersten, Christa Vaerst (1977) in Dichtungs - und Sprachreflexion im Werk von Nelly Sachs interprets the poet's compositions from a linguistic perspective. While discussing and discovering various "Leitmotive," Christa Vaerst reveals a complex critical method. Her method is also most useful for the analysis of specific themes, motifs and images, such as the exile theme. Vaerst's analysis presents, however, only part of Sachs' work and fails to give the reader a proper understanding of the complete context.

The second approach is the interpretation in the context of intellectual history. In order to achieve an accurate understanding of Sachs' work, the reader must gain insight into the intellectual-historical background to her work. Michel promotes this notion:

> Vom geistesgeschichtlichen Standpunkt aus betrachtet muss der Tradition, in der auch und gerade Nelly Sachs steht, vorrangig Beachtung geschenkt werden. Erst eine Berücksichtigung jener Quellen, aus denen Nelly Sachs geschöpft hat, wird ein vollkommenes Verständnis ihrer Dichtung ermöglichen. (3)

An interpretative approach, which includes an understanding of Nelly Sachs' life experience, as well as her sources of studies, is exemplified by W. A. Berendsohn in Nelly Sachs. Einführung in das Werk (1974). Berendsohn relates Sachs' poetic development to her life experiences in a rather positivistic manner. Therefore, the thematic starting point in Sachs' work is the fate of the Jewish people during the Second

World War. In the critic's view, the poet does not, however, limit herself to this theme. Gradually, she expands the theme of her people's fate in a specific historical time until it encompasses the suffering of creation as a whole. Berendsohn's book, although a very general analysis, can be considered as an important overview to Sachs' work and at times touches indirectly on the exile theme.

In Nelly Sachs und die Verwandlung der Welt (1977), Luzia Hardegger continues the basic thought pattern of Berendsohn. In her introduction, Hardegger states the main theme of Sachs' poetry:

> Das durchgehende Thema ist aber nicht das Schicksal der Juden des Dritten Reiches, obwohl es der furchtbare Ausgangspunkt für die Dichtung der Nelly Sachs war. Der Blick der Dichterin weitet sich. Sie sah hinter diesen Juden die Juden aller Zeiten, deren Schicksal immer Heimatlosigkeit und Tod gewesen waren. Der Blick der Nelly Sachs weitet sich noch mehr: sie sah die Menschheit und die ganze Schöpfung unter dem Bann von Heimatlosigkeit und Tod. (6)

The critic goes on to briefly present images of the homelessness of creation taken from Sachs' poetry. The most substantial part of her thesis describes the transformation process in Nelly Sachs' poetry. She highlights selected images of events and places of transformation. This work on transformation will later present a helpful background to the "return from exile" part of my thesis. Basically, her work gives a good overview but lacks specific details.

Ulrich Klingmann in Religion und Religiösitat in der Lyrik von Nelly Sachs (1980), also applies the perspective of intellectual history. He emphasizes the importance of a mythological approach. Notably,

Berendsohn and Hardegger interpreted the poetry by looking at the sources. Their research resulted in an interpretation based on a mystical and religious approach, i.e. they view Sachs' work in the light of a mystical and religious tradition with which Nelly Sachs had become familiar. Klingman adapts this mystical and religious approach and attempts a mythological interpretation.

Ehrhard Bahr's critical study, Nelly Sachs (1980), presents a fresh perspective, combining systematic and chronological approaches. After discussing Sachs' reception in literary circles and among the general reading public, he attempts a chronological summary of the main motifs and themes placed in the appropriate background. Also, in the latter part of his book, Bahr discusses Sachs' various genres: poetry, drama, prose and translation. Bahr's original presentation of themes and motifs is very valuable but his interpretation and analysis of specific compositions are comparatively weak. However, he does present a brief chapter on the exile theme, in which he claims that exile is a central motif present throughout Sachs' work.

In Mystische und Literarische Quellen in der Dichtung von Nelly Sachs (1981), Michel shows that a knowledge of Sachs' sources is necessary for a full understanding of the poetry:

> Voraussetzung dieser Arbeit war die Überzeugung; ohne Kenntnis der Quellen, aus denen Nelly Sachs zweifelshaft frei geschöpft hat, kann das Werk von Nelly Sachs nur ungenügend oder gar nicht erschlossen werden. Erst die sorgfältige Ermittlung der geistesgeschichtlichen Grundlagen ermöglichen eine sprachwissenschaftliche Analyse, die der Gefahr

> entgeht, am eigentlichen Kern des Ausgesagten vorbeizuzielen. (11)

Michel develops his thesis by giving a detailed analysis of sources such as National Socialism, the Old Testament, Jewish mysticism, Christian mysticism and Asian mysticism, and outlining their influences on the images, themes and ideas in the poetry of Nelly Sachs. Throughout his work, Michel touches on the exile theme. Also, his source studies provide good starting points for a more focused and detailed source study.

My thesis follows Bahr's and Michel`s approach, i.e. this study takes a systematic approach, analyzing one specific topic — the exile archetype — and the sources of the archetypal images and motifs, rather than critically interpreting Sachs' language and poetic form. This thesis then develops the limited discussions of the exile theme in the secondary literature. Before this central topic is analyzed, however, the method of my approach must be clarified.

3
Literature and Psychology

3. 1
General Approaches

In their article, "Literature and Psychology," Schwartz and Willbern suggest basic interrelations between the two disciplines. They conclude that an interrelation between literature and psychology

is part of all literary works:

> The psychology we bring to the literary experience affects that experience; the language and concepts we use to engage and comprehend a text will transform the text we discover and the meaning we formulate. There is always literature and psychology, just as there is always literature and history or literature and the sounds of words. (205)

Schwartz and Willbern go on to show that one major relation of literature and psychology would be historical. Literature and psychology become subcategories of intellectual history; thus, the critics aim "to understand each within a larger cultural context" (206). This sophisticated research goes beyond the naive and narrow interpretation of a work as influenced by a particular psychological theory. Rather, this research "seeks to formulate the mutual effects of psychology and literary expression, thus avoiding a unilateral subordination of one to the other" (206). An important aspect involves the relationship between the process of interpretation and theory:

> Whereas more traditional uses of psychoanalysis frequently assigned unconscious meanings to literary works unhistorically and impersonally, contemporary writing reflects awareness of the role of transference and countertransference in creative and critical practice. (216)

Admittedly, as the article by Schwartz and Willbern indicates, there are numerous psychological theories and psychoanalytic approaches. From this abundance of analysis, Jungian theory has been selected

because it is highly suitable for an emotive and religious writer such as Nelly Sachs.

3. 2

A Brief Introduction to Jungian Psychology

Carl Jung himself wrote a brief essay on the interrelationship between art and psychology. The introduction explains the connection between these two disciplines:

> Although the two things (art and psychology) cannot be compared, the close connections which undoubtedly exist between them calls for investigations. These connections arise from the fact that the practice of art is a psychological activity and, as such, can be approached from a psychological angle. (Jung, The portable Jung 301)

Jung then already recognized a connection between the two disciplines. Later this relationship was developed by the different Jungian literary analysts.

A Jungian approach to literature requires a brief introduction to Jungian concepts. For Carl Jung, the psyche or the personality of an individual is composed of various interacting, dynamic levels and systems. The psyche includes thoughts and feelings, as well as conscious and unconsious behavior. Jung identifies three levels within this psyche: (1) the conscious; (2) the personal unconsious; and (3) the collective unconscious (Hall 33).

The consciousness is that part of the psyche with which the

individual achieves full awareness. According to Carl Jung, the person develops her consciousness through experiences from the moment of birth. This process is made possible through the four mental functions of thinking, feeling, sensing and intuiting. Extroversion and introversion are two different attitudes which determine the orientation of the conscious mind. During periods of extroversion, the individual orients herself towards the outer world or the environment, while during introversion the person focuses her energy towards the inner world, the mind of the person.

The proportionate use of the two attitudes and four mental functions varies from person to person. The predominant use of one function and one attitude instead of another accounts for differences in people's characters; i.e. the different levels of awareness, of focus, and of sensitivity. This process of growth into a unique individual is called "individuation":

> The process by which the consciousness of a person becomes individualized or diffentiated from people is known as individuation. (Hall 34)

This maturation process, which for Jung eventually leads to psychic harmony, can also be described as a process of self-realization.

Within the conscious, Jung emphasizes two structures, the ego and the persona (Harre 323). The ego, as the organizer of the conscious mind, is the center of consciousness. During each and every moment, the person is exposed to many experiences. But only a few experiences reach full awareness in the mind. The ego selectively filters out many experiences and allows only a small number to reach

the level of consciousness. The ego is the source of the person's feeling of identity and is responsible for providing continuity to the psyche. Clearly, ego and individuation work together in a close relationship. As the ego is selective, "the person can become individuated only to the extent that the ego permits incoming experiences to become conscious" (Hall 35). Vice versa, the level of individuation determines how many experiences will be acknowledged by the ego and filtered through.

The second structure within the conscious part of the psyche is the persona, which is the person's outward face or mask to the world (Harre 323). In other words, the persona includes those attitudes, thoughts, feelings, roles and behavior which allow the individual to live harmoniously in society and adapt herself to the cultural environment.

Another level of the psyche is the unconscious, which Jung divides into the personal unconscious and the collective unconsious. The personal unconscious, a level adjacent to the ego, is the storage area for matters which fail to gain recognition by the ego. This matter consists of impulses, wishes or experiences, which were subliminally perceived, forgotten or repressed. When necessary, the conscious mind is capable of accessing the content in the personal unconscious and making it conscious (Hall 35).

The third realm of the psyche is the collective unconscious. In therapy, Jung used free association and dream interpretation. During these clinical experiences, Jung discovered that there must be a part in the human unconscious which is not dependent upon personal experiences:

> Eine gewissermassen oberflächliche Schicht des Unbewussten ist zweifellos persönlich. Wir nennen sie das "persönliche Unbewusste." Dieses ruht aber auf einer tieferen Schicht, welche nicht mehr persönlicher Erfahrung und Erwerbung entstammt, sondern angeboren ist. Diese tiefere Schicht ist das sogenannte "kollektive Unbewusste." Ich habe den Ausdruck "kollektiv" gewählt, weil dieses Unbewusste nicht individueller, sondern allgemeiner Natur ist, das heisst im Gegensatz zur persönlichen Psyche Inhalte und Verhaltensweisen, welche überall und in allen Individuen cum grano salis die gleichen sind. (Jung, Gesammelte Werke 9:13-14)

The collective unconsious, then, is independent of personal experiences and functions without the conscious awareness of the individual. This level of psyche is a storage area of latent or primordial images, which are inherited from the past:

> These racial images are not inherited in the sense that a person consciously remembers or has images that his ancestors had. Rather they are predispositions or potentialities for experiencing and responding in the same way that his ancestors did. (Hall 39)

Jung calls this content of the collective unconscious, archetypes. These archetypes, prototypes or pre-existent forms, are universal in character:

> The archetype is a pattern or a drama that is found in human experience. The particular way an archetype is experienced in an individual psyche will be peculiar to that person and will be drawn from his

> or her total experience, but the archetype itself is something universal. (Cliff 19)

Archetypes themselves are unconsious forms, which can be brought into consciousness through particular experiences. These experiences allow the expression of the universal archetype through a specific symbol — a symbol unique to each person. The archetype in its mould can never be made conscious. It always is manifested in a symbolic form, specific to each individual. According to Maud Bodkin, Jung explains archetypes

> as 'psychic residua of numberless experiences of the same type,' experiences which have happened not to the individual but to his ancestors, and of which the results are inherited in the structure of the brain, a priori determinants of individual experience. (1)

Anthony Storr clarifies for us that the archetype "may refer to a situation, a figure or image, or to an idea of symbolic significance" (41). Also, he emphasizes that it is not the factual knowledge that is inherited but rather "a predisposition to create significant myths out of the common stuff of day-to-day human experience" (Storr 40). The individual is born with predispositions to act, to feel and to behave in specific ways. The unique expression and individual manifestations of these predispositions depend upon the experiences, as well as the level of individuation of the person (Hall 41). Storr also emphasizes that the archetype itself cannot be experienced or expressed in a person's life. It is the experience in our conscious, which comes closest to the archetype through the symbols we use:

> The archetype corresponds to the parent word, or to the flexible mould. It does not correspond to the actual manifestation as produced by any particular culture; yet it underlies all manifestations produced by cultures. The nearest one can come to it is by parallel and comparison. "Das Ding an sich" — the thing in itself — will always escape precise definition. (Storr 40)

Jung specifically isolated four archetypes: the anima, the animus, the shadow and the self (Jones 6). The anima is the male's image of the feminine, while the animus is the female's image of the masculine. The shadow is a term to describe man's basic moral nature and all that is primitive and instinctual about the individual. The central archetype, the center of the collective unconsious, is the self. The self, acting as the organizing principle, expresses psychic wholeness or totality.

This paper will use Jung's concept of an archetype in the context of poetry. Notably, it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the value of the archetypal theory or the relevancy of psychology to literature. In this thesis, the Jungian concepts and their relevancy are taken as premises.

4

The Exile Archetype in Literature and in Nelly Sachs' Poetry

This thesis will analyze one major archetype — the exile archetype. The exile archetype is key to understanding and

explicating Sachs' poetry.

In "Nachman (1772-1811): 'The Master of Prayer' — A Kabbalistic View of the Ego's Exile from the Self," an essay in her book A Jungian Approach to Literature, Bettina Knapp discusses the exile archetype. "The Master of Prayer" is a Chassidic tale as told by Martin Buber. Knapp's analysis in each essay is divided into two parts: an ectypal and an archetypal analysis. In the former, she gives a historical background to the setting of the story. In the second part, she highlights the primordial image of the archetypes "which emerge from the deepest layers of the unconscious [and] are found in myths, legends, literary works the world over and from time immemorial" (xi). This story of Jewish mysticism, a tale based on Kabbalistic concepts, describes a series of apocalyptic revelations. Each vision "ushers in the numinosum; each centers around man searching for, finding and talking with God" (Knapp xv). The different events allude to the Kabbalist concept of "Great Cosmic Catastrophe," the Fall or mankind's exile from God. Knapp continues to explain that parallels to this exile occurred throughout history. She suggests that all the events of persecution and exile in Jewish history, such as the Babylonian captivity, the destruction of the Second Temple, the Diaspora and the Holocaust, formed in the Hebrew people a special psychological condition which may be called the exile archetype (189). She continues to relate this theory to the Kabbalistic tale. On a psychological level, the exile archetype in this story presents the exile of the ego from the self:

> Deeply embedded in the psyche, it is expressed in an unconscious fear of the ego's banishment from the Self; of being cut off, rejected, and left to die. The wanderings, encounters, and confrontations, both painful and beneficial . . . that end with the final reintegration on a higher level of the lost ones or the fragmented psyche into the Godhead/Self may also be considered as a paradigm to a great extent of archetypal exile. (Knapp 189)

The exile archetype has two movements: being in exile and returning from exile. Knapp discusses these two movements in terms of a negative and a positive aspect of the archetype. The negative aspect, "which is experienced as severance from one's source or roots, may result in alienation, extreme fear and agitation" (Knapp 209). From a positive point of view, exile may be considered as a point of transformation, a return to a transformed state or a "rite of passage":

> In its positive workings, archetypal exile may be considered a 'rite de passage. ' When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt to wander in the wilderness, where they spent the next forty years, they suffered much physical and spiritual agony. . . . Jethro's wisdom and guidance and the deprivation Moses knew during this period of isolation helped him evolve from the temporal to atemporal visionary sphere. (Knapp 209).

This thesis will analyse the exile archetype in Sachs' poetry from a Jungian perspective. The application of Jungian archetypal theory and of Knapp's analysis indicates that Sachs had a predisposition to create a myth from her experience of exile. For Sachs, a Berlin Jew, the Holocaust precipitated her conscious discovery of exile. Her

experience filled the archetypal "mould" with specific symbols. Some of the sources for these symbols are Biblical, Kabbalistic and Chassidic writings. These writings present exile archetypes and symbolical expression of exile experiences of people during former times. Nelly Sachs draws upon these sources for their symbols and adapts them for her own poetical purposes. From these sources Sachs finds and modifies exile archetypes, symbols of "being in exile" and images of "the return from exile." And, in the process of developing her archetype, Sachs succeeds in addressing and identifying broader human concerns — as does the Jungian critic:

> Archetypal analysis takes the literary work out of its individual and conventional contexts and relates it to humankind in general. (Knapp x)

This universal aspect validates the study of the exile theme in Nelly Sachs' poetry.

The exile archetype is present throughout the three periods of Nelly Sachs' poetry, although the symbolic depiction of the exile archetype gradually changed from a more local and historical focus to a universal perspective. In the next chapter, the first movement of the exile archetype, as seen in the early poetry, will be analyzed. The early work deals with the atrocities of the Second World War and the exile experiences of Jewish people. The "in exile" movement of the archetype can be discovered in two ways: the Jewish people were exiled within their own nation and Nelly Sachs was exiled personally in that she had to flee to Sweden. Often the poet uses shockingly concrete imagery of the events of the Second World War in

conjunction with paradigms from Scripture. Her poetry conveys her conviction that the Jewish people had always lived in a state of isolation and repression. Employing Biblical imagery, Sachs connects the pain of exile during Biblical history with the genocidal "exile" of the Holocaust. However, even in the early poetry, the beginnings of the influence of Jewish mysticism on her art can be recognized.

During the middle and late periods of her poetry, Sachs continued to communicate the exile experience. She found solace in Jewish mystical texts such as the Kabbalah and Chassidic writings. These later poems deal with the issues of why mankind and creation are in pain and exile, and how this severed state can be overcome. In chapter three, the exile archetype in the mystical writings will first be analyzed. Then it will be shown how Nelly Sachs adopted and adapted selected symbols from these sources to reflect her own understanding of exile. Using visionary imagery, she grapples with elusive mystical conceptions of exile: the exile of the Shekhinah, which involves suffering, darkness and hardness; the banishment of the alphabet; and the scattering of the soul sparks, which is accompanied by a constant wandering and longing for unity.

The final chapter of the thesis deals with the second movement of the exile archetype — the return from exile. Throughout her poetry, Nelly Sachs suggests the presence of a transformative element; but it is in the more mature poetry that this quality is asserted most powerfully. The visionary artist shows with increased confidence that exile and division, suffering and darkness, can be overcome. Creation returns to unity of being.

Chapter II

IN EXILE: EARLY POETRY

Nelly Sachs' first two collections of poetry, In den Wohnungen des Todes and Sternverdunklung, have as a basis a direct experience of the Holocaust and exile. Sachs witnessed exile on two levels. While living in Germany during Hitler's reign, the Jewish people were forced to live in exile within their own country. Although German citizens, they became a dispossessed people. Their home environment turned hostile and threatening. The Jews were shipped off to islands of exile within their own country — to concentration camps.

As a Jew, Sachs was also exiled. In 1940, to avoid transport to the camps, she left for Sweden (Bahr 4) where the poet remained in physical exile for the rest of her life.

These immediate and concrete exile experiences influenced her early poetry. According to Bahr, the early work is predominated by the themes of Holocaust, Israel, exile and Chassidism (Bahr 86). Even the title of her first collection of poetry, In den Wohnungen des Todes, evokes the exile situation. In using the image of homes of death, Nelly Sachs creates a frightening paradox. A home, usually associated with family, love, warmth and security, becomes in her poetry a place of destruction. Bahr points out that Sachs' poetry exhibits a perversion of human values (131).

In her first poem of her first collection, Nelly Sachs describes the death camps:

O die Schornsteine
Auf den sinnreich erdachten Wohnungen des Todes,
Als Israels Leib zog aufgelöst in Rauch
Durch die Luft —
Als Essenkehrer ihn ein Stern empfing
Der schwarz wurde
Oder war es ein Sonnenstrahl?

O die Schornsteine!
Freiheitswege für Jeremias und Hiobs Staub —
Wer erdachte euch und baute Stein auf Stein
Den Weg für Flüchtlinge aus Rauch? (I 8)

Nelly Sachs uses concrete images to describe the concentration camps. Smoke of the executed victims rises through the chimneys. And there is enough smoke to darken the skies and the stars. The camp host shows himself to be a murderer:

O die Wohnungen des Todes,
Einladend hergerichtet
Für den Wirt des Hauses, der sonst Gast war —
O ihr Finger,
Die Eingangsschwelle legend
Wie ein Messer zwischen Leben und Tod —

O ihr Schornsteine,
O ihr Finger,
Und Israels Leib im Rauch durch die Luft! (I 8)

Lagercrantz points out that death is usually portrayed as a guest in human dwellings (Text und Kritik 2). In Sachs' poetry, however, death turns out to be the host. Nelly Sachs describes concretely the fingers of the host, a government official, who selected people for

their execution. Notably, already in this early poem there is an intimation of return from an exiled life of suffering, i.e. the chimneys represent "Freiheitswege für Jeremias und Hiob's Staub." In the middle of suffering, there is liberation. This notion of freedom, transcendence and return will be discussed in chapter four.

Using images which are usually associated with security and growth, Nelly Sachs changes them into figures of homelessness, fear and death. In one poem, a gardener, traditionally viewed as a sustainer of life and growth, turns into a gardener of death:

> Hände
> Der Todesgärtner,
> Die ihr aus der Wiegenkamille Tod,
> Die auf den harten Triften gedeiht
> Oder am Abhang,
> Das Treibhausungeheuer eures Gewerbes gezüchtet habt.
> Hände,
> Des Leibes Tabernakel aufbrechend,
> Der Geheimnisse Zeichen wie Tigerzähne packend — (I 15)

Here the gardener, a concentration camp official, "grows" death. His work is to "nurture" death in various ways. Nelly Sachs focuses on the hands of the gardener and questions his upbringing:

> Hände,
> Was tatet ihr,
> Als ihr die Hände von kleinen Kindern waret?
> Hieltet ihr eine Mundharmonika, die Mähne
> Eines Schaukelpferdes, fasstet der Mutter Rock im Dunkel,
> Zeigtet auf ein Wort im Kinderlesebuch —
> War es Gott vielleicht, oder Mensch? (I 15)

The poet inquires about the cause of these inhumane actions. She wonders how the gardener's hands, which once expressed the joyous activities of childhood, can be capable of such terrible acts. She speculates that it may be the death of a loved one which impels him to become a gardener of death. Despite the intensity of Sachs' outcry against brutal suffering, her questions remain unanswered in the poem.

In another poem dealing with the perversion of human values, "Schreckliche Wärterinnen," the survival of the younger generation is threatened:

> O der weinenden Kinder Nacht!
> Der zum Tode gezeichneten Kinder Nacht!
>
> . . .
>
> Schreckliche Wärterinnen
> Sind an die Stelle der Mütter getreten,
>
> . . .
>
> Überall brütet es in den Nestern des Grauens
> Angst säugt die Kleinen statt der Muttermilch.
> (I 10)

In this poem, the "guardians" murder the children in their sleep. A nest, usually a place of nurturing, turns now into an environment filled with expansive fear. The little ones lost all protection.

The annihilation of innocence and youth is further explored in the poem "Ein totes Kind spricht":

> Die Mutter hielt mich an der Hand.
> Dann hob Jemand das Abschiedsmesser:
> Die Mutter löste ihr Hand aus der meinen,
> Damit es mich nicht träfe. (I 13)

Amother attempts to protect her child, yet the child is abruptly taken away. The second stanza implies that the suffering child, separated from its parent, is unable to eat or rest. The pain of division, the "Abschiedsmesser" is only removed after the child dies (Falkenstein 27). Death is the knife of severance. The poet concludes:

> Als man mich zum Tode führte,
> Fühlte ich im letzten Augenblick noch
> Das Herausziehen des grossen
> Abschiedsmessers. (I 13)

A later poem, "Immer dort wo Kinder sterben," identifies the death of children with an exile situation:

> Immer
> dort wo Kinder sterben
> werden die leisesten Dinge heimatlos
> . . .
> Immer
> dort wo Kinder sterben
> werden Stein und Stern
> und so viele Träume
> heimatlos. (I 121-122)

Death brings the ultimate exile — from life itself. Nelly Sachs' awareness of mortality and her own flight lead her to describe the earth as an exiled star:

> O meine Mutter
> wir, die auf einem Waisenstern wohnen —
> zu Ende seufzen den Seufzer derer
> die in den Tod gestossen wurden —

wie oft weicht unter deinen Schritten der Sand
und lässt dich allein — (I 135)

This orphaned star has become a place of death and suffering:

Erde,
alle Seiten deines Todes haben sie angezogen,
zu Ende haben sie deinen Sand geküsst;
der ist schwarz geworden
von soviel Abschied and soviel Tod bereiten (I 80)

Nelly Sachs conveys the deprived conditions of the banished planet in a cycle of poems called "Chöre nach Mitternacht" (I 47). Here, different groups, such as the survivors, the orphans, the dead, the stars and the stones, cry out against injustice and suffering. One poem in the cycle shows the planet earth as an abode of orphans. In "Chor der Waisen," the orphans lament:

Herabgehauen hat man unseren Ast
Und ins Feuer geworfen —
Brennholz hat man aus unseren Beschützern
gemacht —
(I 54)

The orphans are abandoned in a wasteland: "Wir Waisen liegen auf den Feldern der Einsamkeit" (I 54). They accuse the world: "O Welt/ Wir klagen dich an!" (I 54)

As well as describing her experience of exile within her homeland, Sachs, in the early poetry, sets the fate of the Jewish people during the Second World War in a larger context — the fate of her people since the beginning of recorded Jewish history:

> Das grösste Ereignis in der Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes ist der Auszug aus Ägypten und die lange Wanderung durch die Wüste. Nelly Sachs ist nun selbst Flüchtling, und sie erlebt den Tod des jüdischen Volkes. Diese Katastrophe schmilzt in ihrer Phantasie mit dem Jahrtausende alten schmerzlichen Schicksal der Juden zusammen. (Lagercrantz, Text und Kritik 2)

The poet finds a source for her images in the Bible. In effect, she fuses Biblical images with immediate experiences:

> Indem biblische Symbole konkret auf das Leiden der Verfolgung unter Hitler bezogen werden, öffnen sie eine weitere Dimension, treten aus dem spezifisch biblischen Bezug in den konkreten Wirklichkeitsbezug. Zugleich werden biblische und gegenwärtige Geschichte aufeinander bezogen. (Dischner, Text und Kritik 26)

From scripture she learns "im Tod der Juden Universelles und Repräsentatives zugleich zu sehen" (Lagercrantz, Text und Kritik 2). The exile experience, including the Exodus, proves to be a fundamental for her people.

Sand is a key image that Sachs borrows from scripture. Sand suggests the historical exile situation of the Hebrews in the desert:

> Zugleich evoziert das Sand-Motiv auch den "Sinaisand" (W 11), den Wüstensand des Landes Israel . . . . (Kersten, Die Metaphorik 74)

Traditionally, the desert was a place of exile for the Jewish people. Many major events, such as the escape from enslavement in Egypt,

occurred in the context of the desert. Nelly Sachs remembers these historical events when she writes: "Deine Tagebücher/ sind in die leuchtenden Augen / der Wüsten geschrieben / o Israel!" (I 99) The desert marks the place of repeated exile. Sand is used as an image of restless homelessness, exile and mortality. Kersten observes:

> Als dominierende Bedeutungsfunktion (des Sandes) lässt sich der Verweis auf das Geschick ewiger Ruhelosigkeit und Wanderschaft herausarbeiten. (Die Metaphorik 73-74)

Moreover, the poet fuses the sand imagery of exile with the death of Jews in the concentration camps:

> Wer aber leerte den Sand aus euren Schuhen,
> Als ihr zum Sterben aufstehen musstet?
> Den Sand, den Israel heimholte,
> Seinen Wandersand? (I 11)

Nelly Sachs links the sand in the shoes of the dead to the sand of the desert Sinai. During the exodus experience, the Hebrews wandered through the sands of the desert. They faced many perils to reach their goal — a land of milk and honey. The desert hardships are described with particular clarity in the poem, "Aber Deine Brunnen." The first few lines indicate the hostility of the desert:

> Aber Deine Brunnen
> sind deine Tagebücher
> o Israel!
>
> Wieviel Münder hast du geöffnet
> im vertrockneten Sand,
> die Scheibe des Todes abgeschnitten
> vom lebenden Leben. (I 98)

The Hebrews reached the promised land; but even there they were continuously threatened and attacked. Eventually, they were forced to leave. The exodus experience is a paradigm of the existence of the Jewish people. Throughout history, the Hebrews were often forced to leave their settlements. The sand in the shoes of concentration camp victims is emblematic of this wandering. This symbol connects the historical Semitic people with the camp victims. Both ancient and twentieth-century Jews are victimized during their "wanderings."

Another biblical image which Nelly Sachs often uses is dust. Dust symbolizes death and decay, which, in scripture, accompany exile. Dischner points out that the author expands the biblical meaning of dust in that she links the scriptural image to contemporary events:

> Aber das biblische Symbol der Vergänglichkeit wird zugleich um eine Dimension erweitert — diese Dimension ist bestimmt von der Zeit der Verfolgung und der Zeit des Millionenmords in den Gaskammern, der die Sprache und ihre "gewohnten" Symbole verändernd prägt. Der "Staub" in den Konzentrationslagern ist der Staub und die Asche der vergasten und in den Verbrennungsöfen verbrannten Opfer. (Text und Kritik 26)

The image of dust appears in different situations. In the poem, "Chor der Geretteten," the survivors are so fragile that the slightest fright might cause their death, symbolized by dust:

> Zeigt uns noch nicht einen beissenden Hund —
> Es könnte sein, es könnte sein

Dass wir zu Staub zerfallen —
Vor euren Augen zerfallen in Staub. (I 51)

When the victims face their enemies after the Second World War, the only common bond between the two opposing groups is mortality, the inevitable disintegration into dust:

Wir Geretteten,
Wir drücken eure Hand,
Wir erkennen euer Auge —
Aber zusammen hält uns nur noch der Abschied,
Der Abschied im Staub
Hält uns mit euch zusammen. (I 51)

Death makes the hunter and the hunted equal. Throughout her poetry, Nelly Sachs employs the image of dust to characterize the phenomenon of decay and death.

To represent the Jews, Nelly Sachs also uses the biblical image of Israel. The historical people of Israel were persecuted and exiled just as the European Jews were during the Second World War. The poem "Israel" shows that violence and suffering characterize Israel's exile:

Israel,
Zenit der Sehnsucht,
gehäuft über deinem Haupte
ist das Wunder wie Gewitter,
entlädt sich im Schmerzgebirge deiner Zeit. (I 107)

In the time of exile, Israel is dying (I 68), suffering and threatened:

Schwarzer Wald wuchs erstickend um Israel,
Gottes Mitternachtssängerin.

Sie verging im Dunkeln,
Namenlos geworden. (I 21)

In another poem, Nelly Sachs asks herself why Israel is hated so much and forced into banishment:

Warum die schwarze Antwort des
Hasses auf dein Dasein, Israel?
Fremdling du,
einen Stern von weiterher
als die anderen.
Verkauft an diese Erde
damit Einsamkeit fort sich erbe.
. . .
In Chöre der anderen
hast du gesungen
einen Ton höher
oder einen Ton tiefer — (I 100)

Nelly Sachs expands her vision of Israel's fate to include the earth. Not only is Israel in distress but our world has gone blind: "Unsere Schwester die Erde ist die Blinde geworden/ Unter den Leuchtbildern des Himmels (I 60). In this poem, "Chor der Sterne," earth is exiled from the divine:

O Erde, Erde
Stern aller Sterne
Durchzogen von den Spuren des Heimwehs
Die Gott selbst begann — (I 60)

The chorus of stars speaks of loss and longing. But the possibility of return — the "ripening" of longing into the reality of return — is indicated in a question:

Ist niemandes Sehnsucht reif geworden

Dass sie sich erhebt wie der engelhaft
fliegende Samen
Der Löwenzahnblüte? (I 60)

Earth can be restored. There is promise and hope. The stars assure earth: "Einmal wird ein Sternbild Spiegel heissen. / Dann o Blinde wirst du wieder sehn!" (I 61) However, this hope of return and restoration, although intimated in early poems such as "Chor der Sterne," is not stated emphatically in Sachs' work until the more mature poems.

Chapter III

IN EXILE: MIDDLE AND LATE POETRY

Nelly Sachs' early poetry was dominated by the atrocities of the Second World War, her own experience of threat and flight, and the awareness that her own people are exiled within their own country. Early on, the poet started to question the meaning of these terrible events.

Years after the Second World War, Nelly Sachs was still looking for answers. As shown, the Bible was one source providing images on which she could reflect because the Bible dealt with the question of why human beings, particularly the Jewish people, had a history of exile and suffering. Nelly Sachs searched further and found inspiration and solace in Jewish mystical writings. She may have come into contact with such ideas earlier in her life, but it was not until later, when she needed answers, that these writings became meaningful and sources of inspiration. Hardegger notes that in these writings Sachs discovered the deeper meaning and the cause of the homelessness of this world:

> Aus der Notwendingkeit heraus, Sinn and Trost zu finden, beschäftigte sich Nelly Sachs mit mystischen Schriften. In ihnen entdeckte sie Zusammenhänge, lernte den tieferen Grund für die Heimatlosigkeit der Welt zu kennen und Wege, sie zu beenden. (14)

These Jewish mystical writings, in particular the Kabbalah and

Chassidic texts, became, as mentioned above, major influences on her poetry. According to Michel, these sources became so important to Nelly Sachs that the writer can almost be described as a poet of Jewish mysticism:

> Die jüdischen Quellen aus den Bereichen der Kabbala und des Chassidismus gewannen für Nelly Sachs überragende Bedeutung. Weit eher als von "der Dichterin jüdischen Schicksals" liesse sich von ihr als der "Dichterin jüdischer Mystik" sprechen. (211)

Furthermore, the "Dichterin jüdischer Mystik" was continuously studying various books of Jewish mysticism throughout her life.

In 1967, Nelly Sachs wrote to Berendsohn that she became acquainted with Chassidic mysticism during World War II (Michel 129). Michel speculates that the works to which Sachs was referring in her letter are probably Martin Buber's Chassidische Bücher, which were published in 1928. Later on, Sachs read Buber's Die Legende des Baalschem and Die Erzählungen der Chassidism (Michel 129). Nelly Sachs also became familiar with the Kabbalah, particularly the Zohar — the creation chapter in a translation by Gershom Sholem. Also, she studied Gershom Sholem's Die jüdische Mystik in ihren Hauptströmungen (Michel 97-98).

Sachs' entire work reflects the wealth of thought in Jewish mysticism. Even her early poetry used some motifs and symbols from Chassidism (Bahr 68). Notably, one poem, "An euch, die das neue Haus bauen," from her first collection, has an inscription by the Chassidic writer Rabbi Nachamn: "Es gibt Steine wie Seelen" (I 9).

According to Bahr, in Sachs' subsequent writings, the Kabbalistic ideas become a major influence: "Die jüdische Mystik der Kabbala bildet die Grundlage für den zweiten und neuen Durchbruch in ihrer Lyrik um 1955" (51). The reflections, ideas, symbols and images from these Jewish writings permeated Nelly Sachs' work for the rest of her life.

The influence of Jewish mysticism appears in various forms in Nelly Sachs' poetry. Bahr suggests that Sachs herself pointed towards these sources as inspiration, but emphasizes that she never carried out a systematic study of these sources (96). With her poetic intuition, Nelly Sachs discovered in these myths a symbolic expression of exile, which reflected and validated her own experience. According to Bahr, she transformed the ideas from these sources into her own unique poetry:

> Nelly Sachs war kein poeta doctus, es handelt sich bei ihr nicht um die Umsetzung einer Theorie in dichterische Form. Sie hat vielmehr mit ihrer intuitiven mystischen Begabung einen Symbolzusammenhang in ihrer Dichtung hergestellt, der nicht nur dem Wesen und der Struktur der jüdischen Mystik entspricht, sondern sie in einem tieferen Sinne erfasste, als es im einzelnen durch Lektürekenntnisse belegt und erklärt werden kann. Darüber hinaus aber hat sie sich die Tradition in einem Sinne angeeignet, dass man von Verwandlung und Neuschöpfung sprechen muss. Sie hat im Laufe ihrer Entwicklung die jüdische Mystik in den Rahmen einer universalen Mystik eingeordnet, ohne sie dabei hinter sich zu lassen oder aufzugeben. (96-97)

Her poetry reflects these traditional images in a novel manner. Partly,

the poet takes images directly from the books; but she also transforms ideas and images into her own literary thinking. Michel indicates that the influence of Jewish mystical writings on Nelly Sachs' work takes an ambivalent form:

> Die Beinflussung der Dichterin manifestiert sich in ihrem Werk in ambivalenter Form. Sie übernimmt zum einen Teil Gedankengut aus der kabbalistisch-chassidischen Überlieferung; um es in eigener Gestalt im Werk wiederzugeben; andererseits nimmt sie nicht selten bestimmte Motive und Metaphern in teilweise wörtlicher Anlehnung an die literarischen Vorlagen unverändert in ihre Gedichte und szenische Dichtungen auf. (155)

The influence and integration of symbols, metaphors, images and ideas from these sources is so great that without a basic understanding of relevant ideas of Jewish mysticism, true comprehension and enjoyment of Nelly Sachs' poetry is not possible (Michel 54,75). This part of the thesis will give a detailed analysis of the relevant sources and the poetry with respect to the exile archetype.

1
The Kabbalah

Jewish mysticism focuses upon "the idea of the living God who manifests himself in the acts of Creation, Revelation and Redemption" (Scholem, Major Trends 10). Scholem points out that one strand of Jewish mysticism, the Kabbalah, describes a whole religious movement — a movement promoting mysticism and reacting against

the rationalist philosophy of rabbinical Judaism:

> Kabbalah, it must be remembered, is not the name of a certain dogma or system, but rather the general term applied to a whole religious movement. This movement . . . has been going on from Talmudic times to the present day . . . . (Major Trends 18)

Out of this movement came written literature. Specifically, the Kabbalah is a collection of Hebrew writings, which were composed at the same time as the traditional rabbinical texts (Bunes 9).[3] There is little resemblance between the early writings dating from the Talmudic days of the fifth century A. D. and mystical literature of modern times. But the great themes of all Kabbalistic texts, such as the Zohar or Lurianic Kabbalism, center around doctrines of the relationship between God, man and creation.

By studying Scholem's books, Nelly Sachs became familiar with a key chapter of the Spanish Kabbalah, the Zohar, which deeply influenced her work (Hardegger 16). The Zohar is generally considered a major writing of the Spanish Kabbalah. It was composed during the thirteenth century in Spain and is a commentary on the first chapter of Genesis (Bahr 50). The Zohar leads the reader through a process of mystical reflection upon creation.

The key concept and doctrine in the Zohar is the relationship between the creator and every aspect of creation. According to Kabbalistic thought, the manifestation of God represents itself in two worlds — one insensible and the other knowable by mankind:

> The Zohar expressly distinguishes between two worlds, which both represent God. First a primary

> world, the most deeply hidden of all, which remains insensible and unintelligible to all but God, the world of En-Sof; and secondly one joined unto the first, which makes it possible to know God, . . . the world of attributes. The two in reality form one, in the same way - to use the Zohar's simile — as the coal and the flame; that is to say, the coal exists also without a flame, but its latent power manifests itself only in its light. God's mystical attributes are such worlds of light in which the dark nature of En-Sof manifests itself. (Scholem, Major Trends 208)

Mankind can know these mystical attributes. There are ten such attributes or stages, which are called Sephiroth. The Sephiroth consist of: the supreme crown, (Kether Elyon), wisdom (Hokhmah), intelligence (Binah), love (Hesed), power (Gevurah), compassion (Rahmim), lasting endurance (Netsah), majesty (Hod), the basis of all forces in God (Yesod), and the "kingdom of God" (Shekhinah) (Scholem, Major Trends 213). The last stage, the tenth Sefirah, is usually called the Shekhinah. There are many symbolic representations of the Kabbalistic Shekhinah. Some are of particular importance. Often the Shekhinah can be identified with the mystical Ecclesia of Israel (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 106). Another understanding of the tenth Sefirah is the Shekhinah as a representation of the feminine aspect of God, while the ninth Sefirah represents the male potencies of God. As the feminine aspect, the Shekhinah can be manifested in different ways, such as daughter, mother, wife or the Queen (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 104-108).

All ten Sefiroth emanations are ultimately one. The divine life flows freely back and forth. It is important to note that, unlike the

emanations of Plotinus, the stages of the Sefiroth are not intermediary or secondary levels between God and creation. Rather, they can be viewed as various phases within the manifestation of the divinity (Scholem, Major Trends 207-209). God's creative power flows through all stages. In effect, the Kabbalist sees God's presence in every aspect of creation. Yet, most human beings have difficulty recognizing this harmony because of the disruption of the flow and the exile of the Shekhinah.

2

The Exile of the Shekhinah

Shekhinah represents the realm of the visible creation, the Kingdom of God or sphere of mankind. In its original paradisal state, the union of the Shekhinah and God represents a true continuous and constant unity. Nothing disturbed the steady flow of divine life between God, the world and humanity. Mankind had a direct contact with God in the proper harmonious relationship with all of Sefiroth. It was through Adam's sin and fall that this relationship was broken. Scholem describes this important part of the myth:

> . . . the Sefiroth were revealed to Adam in the shape of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, i.e. the middle and the last Sefiroth; instead of preserving their original unity, and thereby unifying the spheres of 'life' and 'knowledge' and bringing salvation to the world, he separated one from the other and set his mind to worship the Shekhinah only without recognizing its union with the other Sefiroth. Thus he interrupted the stream of life

> which flows from sphere to sphere and brought separation and isolation into the world. From this time on there has been a mysterious fissure, not indeed in the substance of Divinity but in its life and action. (Major Trends 232)

Consequently, mankind lost the ability to see the proper, divine relationship between himself, God, and creation. The human person regards Shekhinah as the all instead of one of the Sefiroth, and now mankind views his world in isolation, instead of in the original context. This new perspective represents evil, which "creates an unreal world of false contexts after having destroyed or deserted the real" (Scholem, Major Trends 237). Due to the fall, the Shekhinah is now isolated or outcast. Exile is accompanied by suffering, death, disharmony and alienation.

In the Kabbalah, this idea of banishment is often described as the exile of Ecclesia of Israel, the exile of the soul from its original home or the disjunction of the feminine from the masculine priniciple in God (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 107-108). As a result of the exile of the Shekhinah, a cleavage occurred between the upper and lower levels of the Sefiroth structure. The male and female aspects of the divinity or God and the visible creation became divided. This split is described in various symbolic ways such as through cosmic imagery:

> But the cleavage is also expressed in cosmic symbols, such as the lessening of the moon, degraded to the status of a lightless receiver of light. (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 108)

For the Kabbalist, the goal in life is to overcome this exile situation.

He seeks to reunite God and the Shekhinah (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 108). This is achieved through constant effort, good works and prayer.

Nelly Sachs, for her part, sought illumination of the mystery of suffering. The Zohar gave her broader comprehension and confirmed her own insights. The poet discovered a reflection of her own exile experience in these myths. From a Jungian point of view, one might say that she found symbols in the mystical writings which she intuitively integrated and used to express her own exile archetype. Consequently, her poetry has themes as well as motifs from the Zohar (Michel 99). For example, one cycle of her poetry is named after this Kabbalistic work: "Geheimnis brach aus dem Geheimnis Sohar: Schöpfungskapitel" (I 208). Also, images and ideas from these writings are scattered throughout her work, as will become obvious in the next sections.

One central image of exile in the Zohar is the banishment of the Shekhinah. It is in the Melusinen cycle (I 189-196) that the term "Schechina" appears :

> Immer hinter den Rändern der Welt
> die ausgesetzte Seele Genoveva wartet
> mit dem Kinde Schmerzensreich
> im Heimwehgestrahl.
> Auch Schechina kannst du sagen,
> die Staubgekrönte,
> die durch Israel Schluchzende
> Und die heilige Tierfrau
> mit den sehenden Wunden im Kopf,
> die heilen nicht
> aus Gotteserinnerung (I 194)

Dischner describes how in this poem the Shekhinah is identified with Israel, here representing the feminine part of God in exile:

> Das weibliche, mit Israel identifizierende Element der Schechina im Exil und zugleich ihre Sehnsucht nach Erlösung, ihr Heimweh zum einstigen Zustand göttlicher Harmonie (in dem Männliches und Weibliches ungetrennt sind) verbindet sich bei Nelly Sachs mit anderen Vorstellungsbereichen, die in dichterischer Analogie nebeneinander stehen: Die im Exil lebende . . . Genoveva und die heilige Tierfrau, die mit ihren sehenden Wunden im Kopf wiederum auf die Schechina zurückweist, die im Sohar die schöne Jungfrau, die keine Augen hat (zitiert nach Scholem S. 189), genannt wird, weil sie die Augen im Exil ausgeweint hat (das Exil ist nicht auf die Schechina beschränkt, es ist zeichenhaft für das Leben unter dem Bann). (Text und Kritik 33)

The Shekhinah in Nelly Sachs' poetry is often identified with the feminine and the mystical Ecclesia of Israel (Dischner, Text und Kritik 32). Bahr points out that the whole Melusinen cycle is dominated by the theme of the feminine in exile:

> Im Melusinen-Zyklus, der auf eine altfranzösische Stammsage des 14. Jahrhunderts zurückgeht und weibliche Liebe trotz männlichen Verrats zum Thema hat, wird der Seele im Exil, die als ausgesetzte Genoveva mit dem "Kinde Schmerzensreich" mythisiert ist, die staubverbannte Schechina zur Seite gegeben, die in der jüdischen Mystik das weibliche Element Gottes in der Welt darstellt. Dem Menschen ist es aufgegeben, die Schechina aus dem Exil zu retten. (141)

As the feminine aspect of the Sefiroth structure, the Shekhinah is divided from the whole. Nelly Sachs incorporates these ideas about the exile of the primal world into her poetry. In the poem, "Abend in die Knie," the visible universe was exiled due to Adam's sin:

> Alle im schwarzen Kreuz
> des Schlafes
> Immer nur einer muss wachen —
> seit Adam
> die einsamste Minute schuf (II 134)

The Kabbalistic myth of the exiled Shekhinah depicts the loss of primal harmony. And creation continues to ail. This notion of grandiose loss and suffering is reflected in the poem, "Landschaft aus Schreien" (I 221). Here, all of nature cries out in agony:

> In der Nacht, wo Sterben Genähtes zu trennen
> beginnt,
> reisst die Landschaft aus Schreien
> den schwarzen Verband auf,
>
> Über Moria, dem Klippenabsturz zu Gott,
> schwebt des Opfermessers Fahne
> Abrahams Herz-Sohn-Schrei,
> am grossen Ohr der Bibel liegt er bewahrt.
>
> O die Hieroglyphen aus Schreien,
> an die Tod-Eingangstür gezeichnet. (I 221).

As the poem develops, the cry of Isaac, Abraham's son, merges with the cries of all victims: the small children, the aged, the prisoners, the saints, Job, Christ, the dying in Hiroshima, as well as animals, such as stranded fish and trapped insects (I 221-222). Anguish permeates our exiled existence.

Throughout her poetry, Nelly Sachs describes the death and suffering which all living beings are exposed to in the separated world (Hardegger 12-13). The fate of animals and plants is fused with the fate of humanity. For the poet, market vegetables are "executed nature":

> Auf dem Markt
> Sonnengenährtes schläft
> hingerichtete Natur —
> bald wird in deinen Mund
> die Tomate explodieren (I 339)

These vegetables on the sales table represent "die abgeschnittene Schöpfung" (I 339). In the poem "Die Markthändlerin" (I 35), animals are killed and offered for sale:

> Sanfte Tiere zu verkaufen war dein Tun auf einem
> Markt auf Erden,
> Lockendes sprachst du wie eine Hirtin zu den
> Käuferherden.
> Umstrahlt von heimkehrenden Fischen im
> Tränengloriengewand
> Versteckten Füssen der Tauben die geschrieben
> für Engel im Sand.
> Deine Finger, das blutge Geheimnis berührend und
> abschiedsrot
> Nahmen die kleinen Tode hinein in den riesigen
> Tod. (I 35)

Like people, animals are exposed to misery and mortality (Hardegger 13). Calves are separated from their mothers (I 82). Fish are pulled from water and suffer "zappelnd zwischen Wasser und Land" (I 82). Insects become "kriechender und geflügelter Staub / an unseren

Schuhsolen" (I 82). They are trampled to death or trapped:

> Hiobs Vier-Winde-Schrei
> und der Schrei verborgen im Ölberg
> wie ein von Ohnmacht übermanntes Insekt im
> Kristall. (I 222)

According to the author, the pain in the animal kingdom, as, for example, the birth of a calf, reflects the continuing disruption of divine harmony which began with the Fall:

> Kuh und Kalb
> im warmen Stall
> rauchend im Abschiedsschweiss —
> der goldgefasste Schrecken
> des Schöpfungsbeginns
> rückwärts
> wurzelnd
> in ihren Augen. (I 182)

The suffering then affects plants, animals and people — every aspect of creation.

Nelly Sachs uses various other images, including imagery of darkness and hardness, to describe creation's banished state. The separated world is thrown into darkness and cast into stone. In Jewish mystical writings, the homeless visible part of creation, i.e. the Shekhinah is pulled into darkness: "Durch die Ursünde wurde 'das geistige Licht der Schechina . . . in die Finsterniss der dämonischen Welt des Bösen herabgezogen'" (Scholem qtd. in Hardegger 19). These ideas are reflected in Sachs' description of the Fall plunging our planet into darkness:

Absturz.

. . .

Dies ist der Stern
geschält bis auf den Tod —
Dies ist des Apfels Korngehause
in Sonnenfinsternis gesät

so fallen wir
so fallen wir. (I 280-281)

Our star fell. It became separated from the harmonious interaction of divine unity. Consequently, the earth is immersed in death and darkness. Residents of earth, we cannot avoid decline. Thus we fall. Also, the monthly waning of the moon to total blackness is a symbol for the banishment of the Shekhinah in the Kabbalistic works. Nelly Sachs uses this image as a symbol of death (Dischner, Text und Kritik 34):

So leuchten zwei Hände in der Nacht
Deine Hände
mondlos
nur weil die Agonie
der Umarmung aus Sterben und Liebe
in die Wahrhaftigkeit leitet (II 124)

As explained in the Jewish myths, the Fall meant mankind lost the gift of seeing the proper connection of things, i.e. to see the primal harmonious relationship between the visible world and the other nine Sefiroth. Subsequent wrong actions threw the world increasingly into darkness. Nelly Sachs' poetry indicates that mankind's wrongful acts caused the "Erdennacht" (I 331). Furthermore, the earth is immersed in darkness — a darkness, which drowns out all color: "Grüngefärbte

Landschaften / . . . / ertrunken/ in den Sackgassen der Finsternis" (I 340). Ultimately, life on our planet means suffering in dark exile:

> Dunkelheit
> verwitwet
> schmerzgekrümmt
> gewittert der Fruchtbarkeit
> langen Klageruf
> in brandgeschätzte Himmel (I 295)

And nobody can escape his alienated existence on earth:

> Wer kann sich verstecken
> wie der Fluss im Meer
> oder biegen die Nacht
> . . .
> wenn die Erde ein Fussbreit Jammer ist
> unter ihrem Schöpfer — (II 71)

The entire world is exposed to exile. To intensify this theme of separation, Nelly Sachs also uses the motif of hardening — especially hardening of stone; Hardegger observes:

> Die Dichterin stellte in ihrem Werk die Welt des Nicht-mehr als verhärtete Welt dar. Sie beschrieb damit metaphorisch den Zustand der Welt unter dem Bann von Heimatlosigkeit und Tod. (23)

In Sachs' banished universe, mankind is "Umgestellt von der Steine Totenmusik" (I 217). Human beings themselves are cast into stone:

> Wo ist noch ein Abkömmling
> aus der Erschauerten Nachfolge?
> O so leuchte er auf

im Haufen der Erinnerungslosen,
Versteinten! (I 103)

Also, plants (I 326) and animals are petrified:

Im schwarzen Kristall der Nacht
die eingeschlossene Wespe
der ausgetanzten Zeit
im Starrkrampf lag — (I 225)

Kersten points out that the trapped insect (I 225) has the function, "zeichenhaft einen Zustand der Erstarrung und des Todesschlafs zu repräsentieren, dem einst die erlösenede Verwandlung zuteil wird" (Die Metaphorik 97). In the previous "Urzustand," the stone was soft and alive: "als Stein noch weich war / und wie Blumen ausgesät" (I 209). Now the stone reminds people of this harmonious situation:

Der versteinerte Engel
noch von Erinnerung traufend
von einem früheren Weltall
ohne Zeit (I 345)

One poetic combination of darkness and stone imagery is found in "Dunkelheit" where the earth is "stoned" by darkness:

Von der Nacht gesteinigt
hob mich Schlaf
in Landsflucht weit hinaus

Grenzlinien
die Geburt
an meiner Haut gezogen einst
verlöschte Tod
mit einer Hand Musik

Erlöste Liebe
sich ihr Sternbild
in die Freiheit schrieb — (I 249)

We live in the hardened darkness of banishment. Yet, in this poem, Nelly Sachs already points at the possibility of return. Sleep, which is a visionary state, and death both become places of transformation. The return aspect will be discussed in chapter four.

Nelly Sachs was familiar with the Kabbalistic myth of the exile of the Shekhinah. This Kabbalistic idea is manifested in her poetry through a unique fusion of motifs, such as suffering, death and alienation which dominate hardened, dark creation. As we will see in the next section, a further form of symbolic expression of separation is the exile of the alphabet.

3
The Exile of the Alphabet

The world of Sefiroth is communicated through various symbols, often mystical organisms, such as the tree or the primordial man (Scholem, Major Trends 214-215). Another type of symbolic expression of this Sefiroth structure is the world of language or the world of divine names. Kabbalists view the visible world as based on language. According to Scholem, they regard

> language as something more precious than an inadequate instrument for contact between human beings. . . . Language in its purest form, that is, Hebrew, according to the Kabbalists, reflects the

> fundamental spiritual nature of the world; in other words, it has a mystical value. Speech reaches God because it comes from God. . . . All creation — and this is an important principle of most Kabbalists — is, from the point of view of God, nothing but an expression of the hidden self that begins and ends by giving itself a name, the holy name of God, the perpetual act of creation. All that lives is an expression of God's language. (Major Trends 17)

In the original unified state, the alphabet pre-existed with God. The letters of the alphabet combined to form words which called all things, i.e. the visible part of creation, into being (Hardegger 73). Scholem points out that every part in this world corresponds to a word which can be traced back to the divine source:

> "Alle Welten sind aber durch die Bewegung und Verbindung der Buchstaben entstanden, und alle Buchstaben erhielten, als sie sich nach dem Urbild der richtigen Verbindung zu Wörtern und Alphabeten entfalteten, aus dieser Bewegung heraus ihre Ordnung." (Michel 104)

Through the fall, however, the visible world became detached from the whole; and this means that the alphabet is now also fallen and outcast:

> Die Buchstaben sind durch die Schuld des Menschen in die Dunkelheit gefallen, sind "erschlagen" worden, ertranken in der Sintflut oder harren in "Verstecken" aus (Michel 69).

At the same time, the "fallen" words kept their inherent creative power. Consequently, language itself contains the divine creative

potential and the human person can participate in the divine sphere through speech. The creative power of language gives mankind the ability to heal the separation, while establishing the primal unity (Scholem, Major Trends 17).

Dischner notes that Nelly Sachs' poetry reflects this Kabbalistic conception of speech whenever she speaks of the alphabet or the word (Text und Kritik 37). Also, Kersten emphasizes the importance of the word in the context of the Kabbalistic writings in Sachs' poetry:

> Die Wertung des Wortes als dem verborgenen Urgrund verbundende schöpferischer Instanz alles Entstandenen und der Glaube an die Präexistenz der Wörter vor den Dingen — diese uralte Kabbalistische-wortmystische Grundkonzeption ist in ihrer tiefgreifenden Wirkung auf Thematik und Sprachgestaltung des Werkes von Nelly Sachs nicht zu unterschätzen. (Nelly Sachs 19)

Nelly Sachs adopts the Kabbalistic idea of the pre- existence of the alphabet, such as in the following lines:

> Blitzgeöffnet
> sät
> Buchstaben-Springwurzelwald
> in verschlingende Empfängnis
> Gottes erstes Wort (I 313)

In another poem, "Chassidismus," the creating word originated in the primal state and called all of creation into being:

> Alles ist Heil im Geheimnis
> und das Wort lief aus
> das atemverteilende Weltall,
> . . .

Alles ist Heil im Geheimnis
und lebendig aus der Quelle
wuchs die Sehnsucht

durch die Geschöpfe.
Namen bildeten sich
wie Teiche im Sand (I 141)

Nelly Sachs expresses in this poem the myth that every aspect of creation corresponds to a word of the creator.

Also, the alphabet carries inherent creative powers. Because of the Fall, however, the alphabet, i.e. the visible world, became exiled. Thus, mankind lost the ability to recognize the value of language and to see the connection between the alphabet and its divine source. Sachs' compositions reflect this idea. For her, the "fallen" alphabet is a mere reminder of the once powerfully inventive word. In the following poem, the alphabet is compared to useless wisdom teeth:

Aber hier
immer nur Buchstaben
die ritzen das Auge
sind aber lange schon
unnütze Weisheitszähne geworden
Reste eines entschlummerten Zeitalters (I 288).

Although the creative word is still present in our universe, the human person lost the ability to recognize the source and to visualize the original unity:

Schlaf webt das Atemnetz
heilige Schrift
aber niemand ist hier lesekundig. (I 296)

The alphabet spoken by the creator became our visible world. Yet nobody knows how to read the signs, i.e. nobody understands the divine potential of the alphabet. In Nelly Sachs' poetry, separated creation is crying out for help: "Vokale und Konsonanten / schreien in allen Sprachen: / Hilfe!" (II 91). The "fallen" alphabet, i.e. the "herausgefolterten Buchstaben" (II 37), must be reunited with its primal source. Nelly Sachs asks all people of the earth to allow the words to reign with their creative potential, rather than use the words in a destructive manner:

> Völker der Erde,
> zerstöret nicht das Weltall der Worte,
> zerschneidet nicht mit den Messern des Hasses
> den Laut, der mit dem Atem zugleich geboren
> wurde.
>
> Völker der Erde,
> O dass nicht Einer Tod meine, wenn er
> Leben sagt —
> und nicht Einer Blut, wenn er Wiege spricht —
>
> Völker der Erde
> lasset die Worte an ihrer Quelle,
> denn sie sind es, die die Horizonte
> in die wahren Himmel rücken können
> und mit ihrer abgewandten Seite
> wie eine Maske dahinter die Nacht gähnt
> die Sterne gebären helfen — (I 152)

All people have the task of allowing the alphabet to recreate the primal harmony:

> Aufgabe (vielleicht vor allem des Dichters) muss es nun sein, die Buchstaben, das Alphabet, aus den Verstecken zu holen, neu zu beleben und zu durchlichten. (Michel 69)

In addition to the revival of the divine power of the alphabet, mankind must also collect the soul and spark in every object and living being. The latter idea is the theme of the next section.

4
Chassidism

Chassidism is an outgrowth of the Kabbalistic movement. The motifs, themes, ideas and conception of the Chassidic stories are based on the Kabbalistic myths. The myth of the "broken vessels" is one myth to which Nelly Sachs refers frequently. To show the influence of Chassidism on Sachs' poetry in general and the exile archetype in particular, this thesis will discuss the original Kabblistic myth of the "broken vessels," and show how elements of this myth appear in the Chassidic legends which influenced her poetry.

In his books, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah and Myth, Scholem describes a complex mythological system of the late Kabbalah, the system of Isaac Luria (1534-72). Luria wrote after the expulsion of the Jewish people from Spain and thus attempted to answer why the Jewish people were outcasts:

> From a historical point of view, Luria's myth constitutes a response to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, an event which more than any other in

> Jewish history down to the catastrophe of our time gave urgency to the question; why the exile for the Jews and what is their vocation in the world? This question, the question of the meaning of the Jews' historical experience in exile, is here dealt with even more deeply and fundamentally than in the Zohar. (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 110)

In effect, the entire myth can be viewed as an expression of the exile archetype.

According to Scholem, Luria's system revolves around three major symbols: the tsimtsum, or self-limitation of God; the shevirah or "breaking of the vessels"; and tikkun or harmonious correction and mending of the flaw which came into the word through the shevirah (On the Kabbalah 110). All three concepts will be explained briefly. The symbol or concept of "the breaking of the vessels" will be dealt with in greater detail, as this concept appears again and again in Nelly Sachs' poetry. This concept was picked up in Hassidic and Chassidic writings, which were well known to Nelly Sachs.

Tsitsum describes the divine cosmic process, an interplay of God's withdrawal into Himself and His subsequent emanation through creation. Scholem explains that it is this withdrawal of God into Himself which produces a primordial space:

> The Kabbalists do not say so directly, but it is implicit in their symbolism that this withdrawal of the divine essence into itself is a primordial exile, or self-banishment. (On the Kabbalah 111).

In this primordial place, evil and the "residue of God's infinite light" (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 111) are mixed with a third element, a ray

of God's essence. It is a place from which all archetypes flow. But because of the commingling, tension is produced; and this tension leads to "the breaking of the vessels":

> In the pleroma arise the archetypes of all being, the forms determined by the structure of the sefiroth, of Adam Kadmon, of the creator God who takes a hand in Creation. But the precarious coexistence of the different kinds of divine light produces a new crisis. . . . Every stage of being is grounded in this tension. . . . But the central plan of Creation originates in the lights which shine in strange refraction from the eyes of Adam Kadmon. For the vessels which, themselves consisting of lower mixtures of lights were designed to receive this mighty light of the sefiroth from his eyes and so to serve as vessels and instruments of Creation, shattered under its impact. This is the decisive crisis of all divine and created being, "the breaking of the vessels . . . ." (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 112)

After this crisis, the primal divine harmony is destroyed. Nothing remains in its original place. Everything is now in exile and needs to be redeemed. This process continues onto all levels of Creation; i.e. "everything is in some way broken, everything has a flaw, everything is unfinished" (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 112-113).

The third stage of this symbolic process is the restoration of the original harmony, which is called "tikkun" or restoration. "Tikkun" takes place partly in God and partly in each human person. During the "breaking of the vessels," the divine sparks scatter everywhere; they are exiled. Moreover, the world of light mixes with the world of demonic powers of "shells." Accordingly, mankind's central aim is to

separate the world of demonic powers from the world of light or sparks (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 114).

This goal was to be achieved by the creation of Adam (the biblical Adam). According to Luria's myth, Adam's task was "to remove from himself all the 'fallen sparks' that were still in exile, and to put them in their proper place" (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 115). If Adam would have completed his task, harmony would have been restored and the Shekhinah would have been redeemed from banishment. But Adam failed. He was expelled from paradise. His failure caused an even greater disharmony and a greater exile: " . . . thus, in the symbolism of Adam's banishment from Paradise, human history begins with exile" (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 115).

At this point, Luria introduces another myth, which plays a large part in the later Chassidic works. Scholem indicates Luria's belief that Adam's soul, "in which the entire substance of mankind was concentrated," also shattered into many soul sparks (On the Kabbalah 115). Hence, a mixture of soul sparks and light sparks are in exile:

> . . . the sparks of Adam's soul and the sparks of the Shekhinah disperse, fall, and go into exile where they will be dominated by the shells, the kelippoth. The world of nature and of human existence is the scene of the soul's exile. (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 115)

Therefore, the human goal is to initiate the return of the light and soul sparks to their primal unified state:

> Precisely because the real existence of Israel is so completely an experience of exile, it is at the same

> time symbolic and transparent. Thus in its mythical aspect the exile of Israel ceases to be only a punishment for error. . . . It becomes something greater and deeper, a symbolic mission. In the course of its exile Israel must go everywhere, to every corner of the world, for everywhere a spark of the Shekhinah is waiting to be found, gathered and restored by a religious act. (Scholem, On the Kabbalah 116)

This myth was carried over into Chassidic literature, which is an outgrowth and continuum of Kabbalistic writings. Martin Buber collected many stories and tales of Chassidism. In his book, The Legend of Baal-Schem, Buber gives a descriptive account of Hassidic life. Specifically, these stories describe the life of a holy man, the Baal-Schem. This Hassidic rabbi is portrayed as a highly-evolved spiritual person, and a mediator between God and his people. He is the person who "sees" and "recognizes" the unity of all things (Buber 9). In these stories, Baal-Schem moves from house to house and town to town, telling stories. These legends explain to the listener the present exile situation of the world and how the unity and return from exile can be achieved (Buber 20). The Baal-Schem tells stories about holy persons, the zaddikim. The zaddik detaches himself, wandering the earth, and maintains the solitary goal to return to his true home, his home with God. He cannot possess anything material but remains committed to the spiritual. A visionary, he is described as being able to see the true nature of things. Buber states:

> Und als er betete, verstand er mit einemmal, wie die Schechina, die der Welt einwohnende Gegenwart Gottes, ins Exil herabgesunken ist und wie sie

> gesengtes Hauptes in der Gerbergasse steht. (qtd. by Michel 116-117)

Some zaddiks wander and find their way home through these expeditions. Others need to experience the separation from God more intensely:

> They become "unsettled and fugitive." They go into exile in order to suffer exile with the Shekhinah. (Buber, Die Legende 22)

These Chassidic legends adopt and adapt the themes of broken vessels and scattered light sparks from the Kabbalah. According to the Chassidic legends, all people became vessels for the sparks of the soul, which originated in the primeval soul and became scattered throughout the world (Buber 35). The sparks, which are not able to purify themselves within people, transmigrate from form to form. They remain in material imprisonment, trapped in stones, plants, animals and water. Buber's description of this phenomenon is most beautiful:

> The sparks are to be found everywhere. They are suspended in things as in sealed-off springs; they stoop in the creatures as in walled-up caves; they inhale darkness and they exhale dread; they wait. And those that dwell in space flit hither and thither around the movements of the world like light - mad butterflies, looking to see which of them they might enter in order to be redeemed through them. They all wait expectantly for freedom. (37)

Liberation is not through dogma, but takes place through works —

through direction of thoughts and deeds towards the Other. The human person is called to set the sparks free. With every action, people aid the Shekhinah in the unification process:

> He who lives with others in this way realizes with his deed the truth that all souls are one; for each is a spark from the primordial soul, and the whole of the primordial soul is in each. (Buber 49)

Nelly Sachs was familiar with the myth of the broken vessels, i.e. the teachings about the soul and light sparks from the Chassidic sources (Michel 120). In a letter to Berendsohn (June 3, 1951), she writes about her understanding of these teachings:

> Es ist mein Glaube das nichts verloren geht, alles gesammelt (Daniel) und Heiliges (Anila) trägt es empor. Der chassidische Glaube ist darin das jeder Gedanke, Gefühl, Tat, die göttliche Einwohnung (schechina) auf ihrem Weg zur ewigen Einung ein helfendes oder hinderndes ist. (qtd. by Michel 121)

Also, Bahr points out that the cycle of poems, "Flucht und Verwandlung," presents the theme of the transmigration of souls and sparks with particular strength. The critic maintains:

> Für Nelly Sachs enthält die Materie eine geistige Kraft, die dem göttlichen Funken der jüdischen Mystik entspricht, der in jedem Ding enthalten ist und sich nach Rückkehr und Erlösung sehnt. (Bahr 96)

In Nelly Sachs' work the shattered soul and light sparks are trapped in human beings, animals, plants and inanimate objects:

Ach es sind die Winde und die Geräte
Wie die Windharfen empfänglich
Und wie ein Acker, darin dein Leid wächst,
Und spüren das Staubverwandte mit dir (I 9).

In this poem, the common link between the soul sparks, is expressed in their affinity for suffering and decay; and the soul sparks themselves are imprisoned in objects, fields and humans. In another poem, the divine spark is discovered during the act of brushing hair:

Haar, mein Haar,
ausschlagend in knisternden Funken —
einer Wüste Ginsterstrauch,
erinnerungsentzündet.

Haar, mein Haar,
welcher Sonnenglutball
ist in deine Nacht
zur Ruhe gelegt worden? (I 188)

The poet's hair erupts with crackling sparks which are both spiritual energy and the material phenomenon of static electricity (Bahr 92). Caught within the various objects, the fragmented soul sparks aspire toward freedom:

Mauern und Geräte, den Herd und die Wiege, die
all abgefallenes Stückgut der Sehnsucht sind —
Sehnsucht, die fliegt im blauen Segel der Luft! (I 74)

According to Michel, "das abgefallene Stückgut der Sehnsucht" is related to the separation of the spark from the primal soul (122-123).

Various poems allude to these conceptions of our universe. Outcast man can know only fragments of creation because the exiled

state means man is unable to remember the unified soul and light source:

> Du aus Menschennächten losgebrochen
> Sprichst die Lichtersprache aus den Rissen -
> Die man spricht, wenn das Gehäuse durchstochen
> Und von der wir nur die Funken wissen. (I 44)

In this stanza of the poem, "Der Steinsammler," the visionary, addressed by "Du," transcends the night and is able to speak the language of light or, in other words, is able to be "in touch with" the primal soul. The ordinary people, denoted by the word "wir" in the poem, only know the sparks, i.e. a fragmented part of the whole.

Nelly Sachs' poems, however, portray the idea that all people experienced the wholeness of vision before birth. This idea is linked to a belief in the pre- existence of the souls. As mentioned before, the Kabbalistic myth and Chassidic stories teach that all soul sparks were part of one unified soul and light source in Adam. Consequently, the human soul pre-existed as part of that larger soul. The unborn, a pure and innocent being, is able to experience this oneness. Yet, during birth into the exiled world, most of the experience of unity is forgotten (Michel 76-77, 149-155). Only a dim memory remains. Nelly Sachs connotes this idea whenever she uses the term "Vorgeburt." In the stanza of the following poem, all people vaguely remember the former harmonious state:

> Aber wenn dein Echoangesicht,
> mit der Müdigkeiten Akelei bestreut,
> Sterben übt im Sabbatgold,
> trinkt unser Blut Erinnerung

in einer Landschaft,
die schon da gewesen,
und in der schlummerleichten Vorgeburt
der Seele — (I 190)

Often Nelly Sachs employs the image of the embryo surrounded by the primal light to describe the existence of our soul in a previous state. Michel provides a useful description of the function of the embryonic and light imagery:

> Der Embryo in der "Vorgeburt" sieht mittels des Urlichtes noch nicht die Vielheit, sondern verharrt in der Einheit. Er verkörpert den Zustand des Nicht-gefallen- Seins, in dem das Urlicht noch nicht verborgen war; eine Existenz, deren Charakteristikum die Unwandelbarkeit war. (151)

Before birth, all human beings were able to visualize this limitless wholeness:

Wie im Mutterleib das Ungeborene
mit dem Urlicht auf dem Haupte
randlos sieht
von Stern zu Stern — (I 138)

Nelly Sachs uses this image of the embryo to indicate our faint recollection of a previous existence. As soon as we were born into exile, the vision of wholeness was lost, except for an inkling of that former unified state. She also uses the image as a symbol of hope of a new state to come:

Die Gekrümmte Linie des Leidens
nachtastend die göttlich entzündete Geometrie
des Weltalls

immer auf der Leuchtspur zu dir
und verdunkelt wieder in der Fallsucht
dieser Ungeduld ans Ende zu kommen —

Und hier in den vier Wänden nichts
als die malende Hand der Zeit
der Ewigkeit Embryo
mit dem Urlicht über dem Haupte
und das Herz der gefesselte Flüchtling
springend aus seiner Berufung: Wunde
zu sein — (I 383)

In the middle of suffering, the embryo with the primal light is a symbol of the possibility of return. The last two lines indicate transformation. Suffering, an open wound, is a place of transformation. The hyphen which closes the poem is an indicator of the entrance into an ineffable state. The meaning of this transcendent aspect will be clarified in the last chapter.

Relying on the Bible and Jewish mystical writings as sources of imagery and answers, Nelly Sachs raised and addressed the questions of suffering and exile. And arguably, her explorations of the causes and effects of exile allowed her to envision escape from that constricted state. Her rediscovery of unity, however, is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter IV
RETURN FROM EXILE

1
The New State

Bettina Knapp points out that the return from exile is the positive aspect of the exile archetype (209). As discussed in chapter one, the state of being in exile — with its alienation and suffering — leads to the positive aspect of exile, i.e. transformation. This positive aspect can be given different names: return, rite of passage, transformation, hope or reunification. In this paper, however, it will be looked at primarily from the perspective of return from exile. For Nelly Sachs, return did not mean leaving Sweden and going back to Germany. In her thoughts and thematic approach, she transcended mere physical homecoming. Exile for her became severance from the original unified state — a harmonious interaction of creation with God. Return from exile became a process towards this primal unity. This process in itself is a tranforming event. All of creation, while returning to its primal unity, is altered. Nelly Sachs uses mythological ideas and images adapted from Jewish mystical works to describe the division and subsequent reunification of creation. The human goal in life becomes the creation of unity from chaotic division. In this paper, a few select images will be highlighted in order to explain her poetic perception of the return from exile.

Nelly Sachs' poetry portrays the state of exile as an experience of

alienation, fear and suffering. But at the same time, there remains a resonant note of hope — a possiblility of transformation. The negative aspect of exile always contains the positive one. This process is exemplified by the poem, "In der Flucht":

> In der Flucht
> welch grosser Empfang
> unterwegs —
>
> Eingehüllt
> in der Winde Tuch
> Füsse im Gebet des Sandes
> der niemals Amen sagen kann
> denn er muss
> von der Flosse in den Flügel
> und weiter —
>
> Der kranke Schmetterling
> weiss bald wieder vom Meer —
> Dieser Stein
> mit der Inschrift der Fliege
> hat sich mir in die Hand gegeben —
>
> An Stelle von Heimat
> halte ich die Verwandlungen der Welt — (I 262)

The first three lines of the poem explain that this flight, the restless state of homelessness, already holds the great welcome, i.e. already contains the ascendence to the transcendent state. Kersten suggests that flight already implies transformation:

> Flucht evoziert vielmehr das in allen
> Daseinsbereichen des Kosmos wirksame Prinzip
> unaufhaltsamer Bewegung, permanenter
> Entgrenzung ins Transzendente. In diesem Sinne

> ist Flucht partiell identisch mit dem Prinzip der entmaterialisierenden Verwandlung. (Nelly Sachs 31)

In the stanzas quoted above, this state of flux is expressed through the images of wind and sand. There is metamorphosis from fin to wing, "von der Flosse in den Flügel." Also, "the butterfly which will soon rediscover the ocean" and the "trapped insect" are further images evoking transformation (Kersten, Nelly Sachs 149).

For Nelly Sachs, the transformation process becomes more important than the goal, which is the return from exile (Bahr 145). This is most succinctly expressed in the last two lines of the poem. Nelly Sachs asserts that she prefers the state of transformation to the state of return: "An Stelle von Heimat / halte ich die Verwandlungen der Welt" (I 262). Kersten explains that for Sachs this transformation occurs specifically through the word:

> Wenn erklärt wird: "An Stelle von Heimat / halte ich die Verwandlungen der Welt — ", so kann nichts anders damit gemeint sein, als dass die Partizipation am Prozess der Metamorphose durch das Wort, mithin das Produzieren stets neuer "Verwandlungen" des Artikulierbaren sich ihre eigene "Ewigkeit" schaffen, die sich gerade im Prinzip der niemals abreissenden Bewegung bestätigt. (Nelly Sachs 32)

This transformation is a change into a new state — into the sphere of the music of light. The following poem describes the new sphere:

> In einer Landschaft aus Musik
> in einer Sprache nur aus Licht,
> in einer Glorie,

die das Blut
sich mit der Sehnsuchtzunge angezündet, (I 172)

The novel state has a quality of otherness. This otherness is exemplified by an unearthly sound:

Die Musik
die du hörtest
war eine fremde Musik
Dein Ohr war hinausgerichtet —
Ein Zeichen nahm dich in Anspruch
ass deine Sehweite
kältete dein Blut
stellte Verborgenheit her
zog den Blitz vom Schulterblatt
Du hörtest
Neues (II 85)

During the transformation process, the person will be able to hear this foreign music — something totally different and original. The music comes to our world from a foreign planet (I 299). Light and music have a transformative quality or potential; they transcend earthly exile and heal the separation:

Mit Lippen am Stein des Gebets
Küsse ich lebenslang Tod,
bis der singende Samen aus Gold
den Fels der Trennung zerbricht. (I 157)

Eventually, the hardened division will be overcome by "light-music." The characteristics of this new state of music and light will be discussed in greater detail in the sections which follow.

2

The Return of the Separated Shekhinah

Kabbalistic myths present the Shekhinah as exiled. As a result of this banishment, suffering, death and alienation dominate visible creation. In Nelly Sachs' poetic world, this separated creation is also cast into darkness and hardness. Yet at the same time, Nelly Sachs' work reveals that exile can be overcome. Our dark world of banishment is transformed into a new state of musical light.

For Sachs, stone has signified primal loss, the ancient exile. In the early poem, "Chor der Steine," the chorus proclaims:

> Wir Steine
> Wenn einer uns hebt
> Hebt er Urzeiten empor —
> Wenn einer uns hebt
> Hebt er den Garten Eden empor —
> Wenn einer uns hebt
> Hebt er Adam und Evas Erkenntnis empor
> Und der Schlange staubessende Verführung. (I 58)

The loss is so intimate; we are stones. Stone preserves the primal memory: "Wenn einer uns hebt / Hebt er Billionen Erinnerungen in seiner Hand" (I 58). Note how the repetition of the phrases, "Wenn einer uns hebt" and "Hebt er" suggests the crushing weight of loss. But, as revealed in later compositions, through the return, stone — the heavy burden of loss — is changed into transcendent music. The process of transformation is especially exemplified in the following poem:

Wie leicht
wird Erde sein
nur eine Wolke Abendliebe
wenn als Musik erlöst
der Stein in Landsflucht zieht

und Felsen die
als Alp gehockt
auf Menschenbrust
Schwermutgewichte
aus den Adern sprengen.

Wie leicht
wird Erde sein
nur eine Wolke Abendliebe
wenn schwarzgeheizte Rache
vom Todesengel magnetisch
angezogen
an seinem Schneerock
kalt und still verendet.

Wie leicht
wird Erde sein
nur eine Wolke Abendliebe
wenn Sternenhaftes schwand
mit einem Rosenkuss
aus Nichts — (I 256-257)

The heavy hardened world is liberated. Stone in this poem is "als Musik erlöst." Nightmares and hate will end. Both physical and psychic hardness will be overcome. And the primal source of all being, which Jewish mystical thought often describes with the term "Nichts" (Michel 140), will be approached. Bahr suggests that this return onto a transcendent level is made possible through metamorphosis:

> Die Befreiung von Materie und belasteter Psyche führt in der Wolkenmetapher zu einer Spiritualisierung, die in der letzten Strophe den Kontakt mit dem Nichts, dem En-Sof oder "Urgrund," und damit die Annäherung an den verborgenen Gott ermöglicht. (144)

Matter is transformed into light and music. For Nelly Sachs, this is an ongoing process. In the poem, "In der blauen Ferne," everybody in the valley — in the exiled abyss — is travelling towards something new and fresh, described by images of "blue distance and blossoms":

> In der blauen Ferne,
> wo die rote Apfelbaumallee wandert
> mit himmelbesteigenden Wurzelfüssen,
> wird die Sehnsucht destilliert
> für Alle die im Tale leben.
>
> Die Sonne, am Wegesrand liegend
> mit Zauberstäben,
> gebietet Halt den Reisenden. (I 181)

The travellers are spellbound and caught in a glassy nightmare. As discussed above, hardening and entrapment represent the exile situation. Yet liberation is already tangible:

> Die bleiben stehn
> im gläsernen Albtraum,
> während die Grille fein kratzt
> am Unsichtbaren
>
> und der Stein seinen Staub
> tanzend in Musik verwandelt. (I 181)

Nelly Sachs uses paradoxical images to describe this process of return,

i.e. the cricket already scratches the invisible. In other words, the intangible, invisible state of newness is already here. This transformation is emphasized in the poem by introducing the metamorphosis of stone and dust into music. Dust and sand, which represent exile, are key images. As stone changes its dust into music, the state of musical light is ready to burst forth, and exile is overcome. The process is a journey into dustlessness, as the title of her first book of poetry, Fahrt ins Staublose, denotes. The end of dust, as exemplified in this poem, points toward the end of death and alienation (Hardegger 35).

Hardegger points out that in Nelly Sachs' poetry the transformation of the banished hard universe also entails an overpowering of darkness (37). In the poem, "Nur im Schlaf haben Sterne Herzen," Sachs contemplates the state of human existence at the end of all nights:

> Wie aber wird Liebe sein
> am Ende der Nächte,
> bei den durchsichtig gewordenen Gestirnen?
> Denn Erz kann nicht mehr Erz sein,
> wo Selige sind — (I 230)

A new time of light will begin. The bright stars become brighter and will turn translucent. The night already contains an inherent transformative potential. In the poem, "Und die blindgewordenen Leiber," the night transforms its own darkness (I 363). And this transformative process, i.e. the way towards new light, can soothe and heal:

Aber die Heilung geschieht auf
neuem Weg
denn niemals kann Eingang
dasselbe wie Ausgang sein
wo Abschied und Wiederkunft
geschieden sind
durch die unheilbare Wunde des Lebens —

Und die Aura der Morgenfrühe
ist schon Antwort und Geschenk
einer anderen Nacht — (I 363)

Sachs stresses in this poem that the healing, the return, occurs in a different manner than the separation. There will then be a different night followed by a fresh morning. It is a time when the great darkness will be transformed into light.

In another poem, "Erlöste aus Schlaf," Nelly Sachs combines the images of hardness and darkness and their transformation:

Erlöste
aus Schlaf
werden die grossen Dunkelheiten
der Steinkohlenwälder
auffahren
abwerfen
das glitzernde Laub
der Lichterjahre
und ihre Seele aufdecken — (I 326)

The dark, hardened matter of coal, which is described as entrapped life matter (entrapped wood), resurrects. In the process of transformation, the forest's "light-filled foliage of light years" is dropped and the soul is emancipated. Petrified matter is liberated

and its entrapped spark is set free. Ultimately, stone changes into music; darkness shifts to light. According to Michel and Berendsohn, Nelly Sachs describes with these images "ein unsichtbares Universum" (82,120). This new universe is characterized by "einer Entmaterialisierung und Entgrenzung" (Hardegger 34-36).

Exile is accompanied by darkness, hardness, suffering and death. In Nelly Sachs' work, the return means the dark and hardened world is changed into a state of music and light. Also, during this return to an invisible universe, misery and death are transformed and at the same time are places of transformation. It is within suffering that the new sphere becomes a reality:

> Inmitten
> der Leidensstation
>
> . . .
>
> der Meeresstern der Gewissheit
> mit den Pfeilen der Auferstehung
> leuchtet rubinrot — (I 317)

Enduring the alienation and agony which accompany this exiled world is an unavoidable part of the purification process:

> So muss ich denn aufstehen
> und diesen Felsen durchschmerzen
> bis ich Staubgeworfene
> bräutlich Verschleierte
> den Seeleneingang fand
> wo das immer knospende Samenkorn
> die erste Wunde
> ins Geheimnis schlägt. (I 273)

In Nelly Sachs' poetry, suffering seems to be a precondition to transformation, which opens the entrance into a new state. In the

previous poem, the self has to suffer through the "hardened world", i.e. endure exile, before the soul can enter the new sphere, which is intimated by the words, "das immer knospende Samenkorn" and "Geheimnis." Kersten highlights the phenomenon of suffering with reference to this specific poem:

> Bevor das Ich "Verwandlung" erfährt, hat es das Diesseits, in dem Zeichen, Chiffren und Spuren des "Geheimnisses" verborgen sind, zu durchleiden, zu "durchschmerzen". In metaphorischer Umschreibung wird diese Einsicht ausgesprochen. (Nelly Sachs 25)

Death is another means of return from exile. The poem, "Im Alter," exemplifies this return — the transition from death to life (I 271). Negative images of the bondage and blindness of aging open the poem:

> Im Alter
> der Leib wird umwickelt
> mit Blindenbinden
> bis er kreist
> hilflos
> in Sonnenfinsternis. (I 271)

Moreover, the eclipse of the sun, the source of life, suggests death. Death, however, is not static and final but metamorphoses into sanctified life:

> Tod
> kaum gereift
> ist schon neu befruchtet
> aus Gräbern
> das Öl der Heiligkeit gezogen. (I 271)

The poet uses exalted language. Stars are further emblems of renewal:

> Gestirne
> in der Auferstehung
> brennen Dunkelheit an. (I 271)

And God is prepared to participate in the movement of creation from death to life, from exile to return: "Wieder ist Gott reisefertig" (I 271). Thus, the poet adopts the view of the Kabbalist: God's creative power flows through creation.

Generally, in Sachs' poetry, death becomes a step towards the new state, rather than representing the end. Driven by restlessness and longing, the human moves from death to birth — a birth into a fresh and unknown condition:

> Später Erstling!
> Mit dem Spaten heimgekommen
> ins Ungeschachtete,
> Ungezimmerte,
> nur in die Linie,
> die läuft wieder
> durch die Synagoge der Sehnsucht
> von Tod in Geburt. (I 200)

In Nelly Sachs' poetry, death is not the end (I 207), but death is overcome:

> Schnell ist der Tod aus dem Blick geschafft
> Die Elemente machen Aufruhr
> doch die knospenden Sphären
> drängen schon mit Auferstehung ein
> und das Wortlose heilt den erkrankten Stern —
> (II 28)

The poem, "Schnell ist der Tod aus dem Blick geschafft," uses striking images to describe the new state. In the blossoming spheres, the elements are tumultuous and resurrected, i.e. they become part of the transformative process. "Das Wortlose," i.e. the new state (Hardegger 109), heals ailing creation.

The exiled planet returns to the state of the music of light, a condition beyond death. To symbolize the journey into the ineffable state to which death leads, Sachs often places a dash at the end of the poem:

> Überall die Erde
> baut an ihren Heimwehkolonien.
> Nicht zu landen
> auf den Ozeanen des süchtigen Blutes
> nur zu wiegen sich
> in Lichtmusik aus Ebbe und Flut
> nur zu wiegen sich
> im Rhythmus des unverwundeten
> Ewigskeitszeichen:
> Leben-Tod — (I 331-332)

Bahr points out that the dash found at the end of many of her poems frequently denotes the beginning of the indescribable phase: "Der Gedankenstrich wird später zum symbolischen Zeichen der mystischen Grenze des Gedichts" (138). During death, the soul enters this inexpressible condition and returns home (I 192). In the new state, the soul sparks will be reunited and the "Urlicht" will be restored (I 269). This leads us to the next section, which discusses the unification of the soul sparks.

3

Chassidism and the Return

According to the Kabbalistic and Chassidic myth of "broken vessels," soul and light sparks were separated from their original unity. It is the task of every human being to return the sparks to their original source (Michel 136), and thus help heal ailing creation. Various persons achieve this goal. In one poem, Daniel collects the fragments:

> Dort wo die Zeit heimisch wurde im Tod
> erhob sich Daniel,
> der hohen Engel Scherbeneinsammler,
> Aufbewahrer des Abgerissenen (I 205)

As well, the stone collector knows and experiences the new state of unified light:

> Du hast der Erdenzeiten Stille
> Gesammelt in den Steinen.
> Wieviel Morgenröten im Berylle
> Wieviel Fernen im Kristalle scheinen
>
> Mit der Biene, die auf einer Wicke
> Abertausendjährgen Honig braute,
> Doch Opal mit seinem Seherblicke
> Längst dein Sterben dir schon anvertraute.
>
> Du, aus Menschennächten losgebrochen
> Sprichst die Lichtersprache aus den Rissen —
> Die man spricht, wenn das Gehäus durchstochen
> Und von der wir nur die Funken wissen. (I 44)

The stone collector has the visionary gift of recognizing wholeness. Michel affirms that the stone collector — as well as Daniel — works at liberating fallen creation (120).

The task of healing division occurs through devotion, love, good deeds and prayer. In Nelly Sachs' work, the pious and holy person mends the broken fragments of creation:

> Aber der Zusammenhang
> liegt eingerollt
> in der Gebetskaspel eines Frommen,
> dem die Scherben gekitted wurden
> mit der Gnade Wundbalsam — (I 176)

Through mercy and prayer, the pious man is able to recognize the correlation of the wholeness, after the broken pieces were unified. It is also through love that the division is healed back into wholeness. Only a few persons, such as Elijah and Christ, loved enough to break through the separation:

> Nur einige von den grossen Verzweiflern
> haben so geliebt,
> Dass der Nacht Granit aufsprang
> vor ihres Blitzes weissschneidendem Geweih.
> (I 204)

In the Chassidic legends, the Zaddik — who represents an actualization of the true human vocation — envisions and enacts the unity of the primal creation. Michel comments upon the role of the Zaddik:

> Zentraler Gedanke bleibt allerdings immer die
> Vorstellung vom Zaddik als Verbindungsglied

zwischen sichtbarem und unsichtbarem Universum.
Der Zaddik repräsentiert den "wahren Menschen,"
der zu seiner eigentlichen Bestimmung gefunden
hat. (132)

Nelly Sachs incorporates this idea in her poetry. For her, the Baalschem takes the connecting function of the Zaddik, becoming the link between above and below (Michel 135). In the poem "Franziskus-Baalschem," saints and prophets, such as Francis and Baalschem have these powers of transformation:

Franziskus-Baalschem übersteigen heiliges Fasten
glänzen im Nichts —
Der Ölberg betet mit dem einzigen Schrei
der dem Stein ein Herz zerriss
Musik der Agonie
ins Ohr des Universums
das mit Welten Stigmatisierte
entzündet seine Umgangssprache — (I 353)

It is the Baalschem to whom people look for help. He envisions the path to heaven, as he has the gift of "seeing" the true connections of the visible and invisible creation:

Und es ist Nacht, die sich geladen hat
mit Sprengstoff des Erwachens, und aufspringt
das Geheimnis der Sekunde-entstirnte schon
in Baalschems ungebrochenem Blick, der zieht
am Faden der Gnade Leben und Tod
in Gottesversöhnung hoch. (I 351)

The poem continues to explain that through the power of the Baalschem suffering is transformed:

Und die Farbe Nichts lugt nachtenfärbend
aus dem Opfertod der Zeiten
wenn der Heilige tanzend die Gebete weitersagt
die sie im Geäst der Adern hängen liessen
oder zur Entzündung einer Martersonne. (I 351)

According to Chassidic thought, "die Farbe Nichts" reflects the ultimate source of all being (Michel 140). Through prayer and action, the Baalschem transforms the suffering, i.e. the "Opfertod", into "die Farbe Nichts". The broken world is returned to its primal state of unity.

Nelly Sachs' compositions reveal that exile does not have to be the final state. The broken fragments can be rejoined and made whole. The primordial light and soul can be restored. Hardegger states that in Sachs' poetry the alienated world carries the inherent potential of transformation:

> Die Dichterin verstand, dass die Heimatlosigkeit
> kein endgültiger Zustand zu sein brauchte. Auf Exil
> konnte Erlösung folgen. Scherben konnten gekittet
> werden (N 176). Das Urlicht konnte zu den
> Menschen zurückkehren. Die heimatlose Welt
> konnte verwandelt werden. (22).

During this process of reunification, the soul returns home:

Ausfährt im Sterben
der Rätsel Kometenschweif,
leuchtet,
wenn die Seele
sich heimtastet an seinem Geländer. (I 192)

As we will see in the next section, however, reunification is not limited to the individual soul.

4

The Return of the Alphabet

"The journey into dustlessness" or "the return from exile" occurs also through the Kabbalistic word. As discussed in chapter three of this thesis, Nelly Sachs uses ideas and motifs from the Jewish myth of the exile of the alphabet. In the context of the myth, she emphasizes throughout her poetry the creative power of the word. The word itself transforms the severance and aids in the reunification process of the visible world and God. Through the power of the word, creation is transformed. Kersten states that matter is spiritualized through the word:

> Das Wort wird begriffen als spirtuelle Schöpfungspotenz; in ihm ist annäherungsweise jene entmaterialisierende Verwandlung der diesseitigen Wirklichkeit in einen transzendenten Raum der Vereinigung von Geburt und Tod, in das "unsichtbare Universum" zu leisten. Nelly Sachs ist — wie sie selbst bezeugt — "immer bedacht, das Unsägliche auf eine transzendente Ebene zu ziehen." Intendiert ist eine Spiritualisierung der Materie bis zur Transparenz, bis zum Umschlagen des Wortes ins Schweigen. (Die Metaphorik 34)

Throughout Nelly Sachs' poetry, the alphabet is associated with recreative abilities. The first poem of the cycle, "Geheimnis brach aus

dem Geheimnis Sohar: Schöpfungkapitel," reveals this power of the alphabet. Here, the word of the composer of the Zohar actualized its inherent creative potential:

> Da schrieb der Schreiber des Sohar
> und öffnete der Worte Adernetz
> und führte Blut von den Gestirnen ein,
> die kreisten unsichtbar, und nur
> von Sehnsucht angezündet.
>
> Des Alphabetes Leiche hob sich aus dem Grab,
> Buchstabenengel, uraltes Kristall,
> . . . . (I 209)

The composition of the writer of the Zohar opens the "Worte Adernetz" and causes the resurrection of the "Alphabetes Leiche" from its grave (Kersten, Nelly Sachs 27). Dischner maintains that the image "Alphabetes Leiche" has to be understood concretely or literally, rather than metaphorically. She bases her claim on another aspect of the Kabbalistic myth of creation:

> Die Buchstaben bei den jüdischen Mystikern bezeichnen nicht nur den Namen Gottes (JHWH), sie sind Gott selbst . . . . Die Buchstaben stellen einen mystischen Körper der Gottheit dar, und Gott soll die Seele für die Buchstaben sein (die Konsonanten verhalten sich zu den Vokalen wie der Leib zur Psyche — im Buch Bahir werden die Konsonanten mit dem Stofflich-Hylischen verglichen —). (39)

By writing, the poet initiates the divine potential of the alphabet. When the alphabet is used properly, the divine resurrects within creation, pointing towards a transformation of our world.

The poem continues to explain that the creative word carries the power of healing and transformation:

> Und, Schwarzer Tiger, brüllte auf
> die Nacht; und wälzte sich
> und blutete mit Funken
> die Wunde Tag.
>
> Das Licht war schon ein Mund der schwieg,
> nur eine Aura noch den Seelengott verriet. (I 209)

The night is transformed into day. In the context of the Jewish myth, the separated state is transcended. Another poem of the Zohar cycle emphasizes the transformative power of the word:

> Und wicklet aus, als wärens Linnentucher,
> darin Geburt und Tod ist eingehüllt,
> Buchstabenleib, die Falterpuppe
> aus grüner, roter, weisser Finsternis
> und wickelt wieder ein in Liebesleiden
> wie Mütter tun; denn Leiden ist Versteck fürs Licht.
>
> Doch während er wie Sommer oder Winter handelt,
> schwebt schon Ersehntes, sehnsuchtsvoll
> verwandelt. (I 210)

Here, the writer "dresses" and "undresses" the word. His proper use of the alphabet carries the power of metamorphosis (Kersten, Die Metaphorik 42). Throughout the year — winter and summer — his compositions initiate the long-desired change. Also, Bahr points out that this poem, as well as the whole cycle of poems, reveals the recreative potential of language:

> Die Sohar-Gedichte sind direkt von dem
> Schöpfungkapitel in der Übersetzung von Gershom

> Scholem beeinflusst und beziehen ihre Metaphern von der kabbalistischen Buchstabenmystik. Die Wiederbelebung des Alphabets durch den Schreiber des Sohar führt zur Wiederholung des Schöpfungvorganges. Worte-Schaffen heisst Welt-Schaffen. (143)

Throughout Nelly Sachs' work, the word liberates the entire creation. In the poem, "In meiner Kammer," which has been discussed before as an example of universal mysticism (see p. 11), the entire universe is longing for emancipation:

> In meiner Kammer
> wo mein Bett steht
> ein Tisch ein Stuhl
> der Küchenherd
> kniet das Universum wie überall
> um erlöst zu werden
> von der Unsichtbarkeit —
> Ich mache einen Strich
> schreibe das Alphabet
>
> . . .
>
> da beginnt die Erde zu hämmern
> die Nacht wird lose
> fällt aus
> toter Zahn vom Gebiss — (II 63)

It is the alphabet, here the written word of a writer, which initiates transformation. The night, a symbol of exile, is overcome as it becomes useless like a dead tooth. Michel emphasizes this healing power of the alphabet:

> Dem Wort wird eine heilende (heiligende) Funktion zugesprochen. Ihm wohnt die Kraft der Umwandlung inne. Es vermag, die Metamorphose

der 'gefallenen Schöpfung' zu initiieren. Diese erstreckt sich bis auf "Bett, Tisch und Stuhl" . . . (72)

This Kabbalistic idea of the inherent recreative energy of the alphabet is also evident in "Ich schreibe dich —":

Ich schreibe dich —
Zur Welt bist du wieder gekommen
mit geisternder Buchstabenkraft
die hat getastet nach deinem Wesen
Licht scheint
und deine Fingerspitzen glühen in der Nacht
Sternbild bei der Geburt
aus Dunkelheit wie diese Zeilen — (II 76)

The metamorphic power of the word resurrects and transforms darkness into light, i.e. the exile condition is overcome. Moreover, language reaches God because language originates from God (Scholem, Major Trends 17). Within our world, words have creative energy and can aid in reunification.

The return from exile is the positive aspect and second movement of exile. The return overcomes severance from the primal unified state and helps humanity recover the harmonious interaction of creation with God. Return from exile brings about a rediscovery of the original unity; and, returning to God, all of creation is transformed. Sachs employs mythological ideas and images from Jewish mystical writings to describe the severance and subsequent reunification of creation. A healing sort of metamorphosis becomes ascendent. Broken vessels become whole. Bleak stone is transformed into mellifluous music. Sheer light conquers dark. The Shekhinah and

soul sparks return to the original primal state. The alphabet and word characterize and energize this unifying return. Inevitably, the world is transformed and recreated.

CONCLUSION

Bettina Knapp suggests that continuous events of exile and persecution formed in the Hebrews a special psychological condition which may be called the exile archetype. This archetype has two movements: being in exile and returning from exile. The "in exile" movement, the negative aspect of the exile archetype," involves severance from personal roots or a unified source, which may result in extreme agitation and alienation. The "return from exile" movement, the positive aspect of the archetype, is the possible transformation and transcendence of the separated state, or, in Knapp's words, a "rite of passage."

For inspiration and solace while exiled, Nelly Sachs studied Jewish mystical works such as the Kabbalah and Chassidic writings. These texts are symbolic communications of the exile events of the historical Hebrews. Through the mythological expression of the exile archetype in these writings, Nelly Sachs discovered a personal and universal typology, which she conveyed in her work. The application of Bettina Knapp's analysis, which is based on Jungian archetypal theory, to Sachs' work suggests that Sachs had a predisposition to creating a myth from her experiences as an outcast. Consequently, Sachs' poetry exhibits a unique exile archetype. Due to the complexity of her imagery, the "in exile" and "return from exile" aspects of her work required detailed discussion.

Nelly Sachs' early poetry is dominated by the atrocities of the Holocaust. During the Second World War, Sachs endured exile on two

levels. Her homeland turned hostile and the semitic people were confined in concentration camps — exiled within their own country. Furthermore, Nelly Sachs was personally alienated when she left for Sweden. She vented this "in exile" ordeal in various ways. Her poetry exposes the twisted values of the Nazi period. Sachs unmasks the "host," revealing the killer. She shows the slaughter of children by their "guardians" and the perversion of "sustainers of life" into "gardeners of death." Also, Sachs sets the Holocaust in a larger framework by linking this twentieth-century mass tragedy with the persecution and "wandering" of all Hebrews throughout history. Desolate images of sand, dust and Israel evoke prior trials and disasters.

As Nelly Sachs continued to reflect upon her experiences, the Kabbalah and Chassidic writings provided ideas and symbols for an exile archetype. Although the Chassidic influence was already present in her earlier poetry, images and motifs from the Kabbalistic works dominated Sachs' middle and late poetry. The writer's compositions reflected the idea that the visible universe was banished from the encompassing divine order. In the ancient Jewish texts, this notion is communicated symbolically through the exile myths of the Shekhinah, the alphabet and the "breaking of the vessels." Some elements of these myths are present in her poetry. Suffering and death dominate our hardened, dark universe, in which all of creation, including all living beings, are in torment. Soul sparks, broken off from a unified source, are scattered widely. They wait for healing liberation. Also, humanity does not tap the inherent divine potential of the alphabet.

This negative aspect of the exile archetype is present throughout Sachs' work. Yet her work reveals a faith in the transformation of the outcast star into a blossoming sphere of music and light. Describing the transformative return is difficult because the process is ultimately ineffable. Symbols allow a faint suggestion of the qualities of such a process. For Nelly Sachs, transcendence of alienated existence means an overpowering of hardness and darkness. Pain and mortality are overcome and, at the same time, are places of transformation. The Shekhinah returns to its primal state of union with the other Sefiroth. The visionary frees the soul sparks and mends the fragments of the "broken world." The alphabet heals and energizes this return when used with a proper understanding of its divine power. Spiritually-sensitive writers are able to participate in the return.

Nelly Sachs chose symbols from various writings and fused them with her own imagery. My analysis shows the strong presence of a unique exile archetype in her work. Throughout her poetry, there are many examples of the "in exile" and "return" movements. Some poems, especially early ones, mainly depict elements from the negative aspect. Other poems, especially later ones, tend to explore elements of the positive movement. However, in many of Sachs' poems, both aspects are present. Generally, Sachs' entire opus reflects the exile archetype in which the consciousness of banishment is ultimately overwhelmed by faithful hope in transformation — the return from exile.

My analysis has been aimed at clarifying the meaning of Sachs' often obscure and disjointed images. A common stream of ideas,

connoted by the exile archetype, should now be evident in her work.

NOTES

[1] Nelly Sachs, Fahrt ins Staublose. Die Gedichte der Nelly Sachs (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1961), 8. Hereafter, Volume I is abbreviated to I. Volume I contains the collections In den Wohnungen des Todes (1946), Sternverdunklung (1949), Und niemand weiss weiter (1957), Flucht und Verwandlung (1959). Note that the second volume, Suche nach Lebenden — Die Gedichte der Nelly Sachs (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), is hereafter abbreviated to II. Volume II contains the collections Glühende Ratsel I, II, III, IV (1965), Die Suchende (1965) and Teile dich Nacht (published posthumously in 1971).

[2] The poetry discussed hereafter will refer only to poetry written in Sweden. The term, "early poetry," refers to the first collections of poetry written in exile: In den Wohnungen des Todes (1946) and Sternverdunklung (1949).

[3] The primary literary source of Judaism is the Old Testament, especially the pentateuch (Torah). Another source is the Mishnah, a collection of rabbinical literature, which comments upon the Old Testament law and traditions. The Gemera is a practical interpretation and reflection upon the Mishnah. Mishnah and Gemera are the two parts of the Talmud. The talmudic writings, i.e. the traditional rabbinical texts, were formed during the fifth century A. D., and material was added during later years.

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